

The 'Magic Lantern' itself, or at least a part of the range, is being manufactured under licence by James Thomas Engineering Ltd.

ELECTROSONIC link with Finland

Another, though very different company that has decided to seek greater corporate security and profit by linking-up with a bigger European rival is Electrosonic. The company they have chosen is OY Helvar of Finland who have taken a substantial minority shareholding in the English firm. Some theatre and television technicians will know about the Helvar memory lighting control and dimmers advertised briefly over here some three or four years ago but the chief product of this company is fluorescent lighting ballasts. They were one of the first companies to market an all-electronic ballast. Over 80% of their output is exported. Electrosonic, of course, are well known in the entertainment industry in most parts of the world for a very successful range of theatre lighting controls and dimmers, audio-visual products, sound equipment and systems engineering. They have won a high reputation for dimming fluorescent lighting and offer clever control systems for all types of decorative architectural lighting. Together, the two companies will use their combined resources to exploit wider export markets for their special products and services but will remain separate and independent to service their existing distributors and customers.

SOUNDCRAFT Sponsor Century Theatre

The Century Theatre tour of *Blood Brothers*, a musical by Willy Russell, was made possible by the generous sponsorship of Soundcraft Electronics Ltd. Robert Longthorn, production manager for *Blood Brothers*, reports as follows -



Peter Morris (sound operator) and Liza Spenz (who plays Mrs. Johnston in the Century Theatre autumn tour of *Blood Brothers*) at the Soundcraft mixer during a break in rehearsals.

"The show is playing at middle scale venues, so a very powerful sound system was not required. However, as the lyrics are crucial to the telling of the *Blood Brothers* story, the highest quality of equipment was specified by the show's technical team."

"Soundcraft Electronics have risen to the occasion by supplying a 24/4/2 Series 200SR Mixer and SA1000, SA600 and SA150 amplifiers. The new series 200SR has proved ideal for the show with its sophisticated and comprehensive facilities coupled with very compact size. The power amplifiers also combine the ruggedness required for road use with very compact dimensions and the clean sound and power required for the variety of venues on the tour, from the 300-seat Venn Street Arts Centre in Huddersfield to the three tier, 530-seat Theatre Royal, Wakefield."

CROYDON COLLEGE show skills

Second year B/TEC HND theatre students at Croydon College presented a production of 'Ring Round the Moon' at the end of 1986 to demonstrate the skills learned on the course.

In an excellent collaboration with the actor members of the Croydon Histrionic Society and the Croydon Decorative and Fine Arts Society second year students designed and executed set, costumes and lighting and provided stage management for the production.

Presented in the College Hall, a flat floor but reasonably well equipped theatre-cum-assembly room, the students achieved a solid, well finished set and a high standard of lighting, costumes and presentation that must have given them much enjoyment and satisfaction to create. Well served by the high standard of their actors, the entertainment was an excellent start for their careers in professional theatre.

DESIGN for DANCE Exhibition

For those who's interest in theatre includes the designs and graphics by masters of scenography and costume devised for all types of dance; from international ballet, spectaculars at the London Palladium and the Windmill and for film and television; there is an exhibition devised by Charles Spencer at Joshua Taylor's, Bridge Street, Cambridge. All works are for sale at prices ranging from £50 to £500. The exhibition is open between February 5th and 28th.

REIDing SHELF

Charles Osborne has never been one to soften his word or his pen out of compassion for those in whom he perceives inadequacies. So his 'memoirs of an uncivil servant' are more straightforward, factual and witty than your average showbiz autobiography. There is also a personal honesty: his own shortcomings are presented as self-acknowledgement rather than as a public airing of unresolved problems.

The title **GIVING IT AWAY** refers to Charles Osborne's twenty years with the Arts Council when he was their agent, often less than willing, for dispensing the nation's literature subsidy. Throughout this period he held a view, which seems absolutely logical to me if not to most of his panel and their clients, that the money would be more effective if used to subsidise publishers rather than writers and poets. Anyone disagreeing with this should certainly read the book. The ways of the Arts Council are inevitably a subject of fascination to all of us who labour by word, action, sound or image to entertain and elevate: this section of the book yields confirmations rather than surprises.

Osborne's Arts Council activities have their own special chapter: he keeps them separate from the mainstream story of his life before and during these years. This approach works well because he was able to pursue a parallel career as a writer, commentator and critic throughout his time with the Council. This did not always please the mandarins. But surely it is basically a good idea to have a Literature Director who writes, especially as this can be done before breakfast. Let us hope that there is an ACGB development plan for drama officers to be given sabbaticals to act, direct, design, stage manage, push or fly.

Charles Osborne's interests encompass all the arts and he had quite an extensive acting career. His book therefore records a lot of the flavour of the general development of culture in post-war Britain, as well as giving us some indication of what it was like to grow up in Brisbane.

The concluding section is called 'name dropping'—an alphabetical listing of brief encounters with a hundred or so of the notable and notorious in the parish of the arts. Because these anecdotes are mostly of much wit but little consequence, they often tell us more about the name than would an extended essay.

A FAMILY & ITS FORTUNES is in a gentler more traditional mould although Rachel Kempson is able to refer to areas of marriage difficulties which have only very recently become mentionable in autobiography. Rachel Kempson is also Lady Redgrave and therefore much of her story is