

ABTT TRADE SHOW 87

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Prologue

Can it really be nine years since the first ABTT Trade Show? Was there nowhere, before 1979, to see rival theatre products side by side and nowhere to meet old friends and all those famous and infamous 'personalities' that flocked to Riverside Studios at the beginning of March? Memories of the earlier three shows at Riverside are still fairly clear, from the one studio beginning to this year's total takeover using both studios, the art gallery and upstairs cinema. Then, before that, there were the years at the Round House, and before that, on stage at the Shaftesbury Theatre, and the year before, (the first year?) on stage at the Piccadilly theatre in repertoire, as someone put it at the time, with Barry Humphries. But wasn't there a show at the Donmar Warehouse? Sightline for Spring 1980 confirms that there was and that it was in 1978 and the very first. So, despite the claim on the glossy catalogue (courtesy of The Stage) that this was show number nine, it seems we should be celebrating ten years of this highly successful ABTT annual event.

Technology, of course, still dominates the show. Reviewers have always been quick to comment on the preponderance of lighting exhibits and nothing seems likely to change this stage of affairs, given the difficulties of demonstrating sound systems in open-plan exhibition halls, and the weight and bulk of flying systems and the moving machinery. Nevertheless, there was a significant change this year, for this was the show at which lights really began to move!

However, for once, let's leave the lights and dimmers to the end and start with sound.

Act 1. Setting the Scene

Sound and Communications

TURBOSOUND Ltd manufacture top quality loudspeakers and had had the magnificent idea of bringing an acoustically absorbing shed to house their demonstrations. Inside, heads, chest cavities and even bones could be set vibrating while outside relative comfort prevailed. No use to attempt evaluation but professionals were seen to be nodding in admiration and the pictures of installations looked impressive and tidy. At the other end of the wire, so to speak, **SENNHEISER** were content to display their range of quality microphones and radio-mic kits and infra-red deaf aid systems which many theatres have found to be more satisfactory than the induction loop method. **CANFORD AUDIO Ltd**, a leading distributor of specialist audio equipment, showed some of the 1000 items from its catalogue and the TecPro communication system, formerly the Technical Projects intercom, which they now manufacture and

distribute. **VERBATIM COMMUNICATIONS** can also offer a talkback system designed to be compatible with the Technical Projects system and also with the Clearcom system. This company, visiting the show for the first time, specialises in show relay, calls and cue communications for the entertainment industry and offers a standard range of cue light panels with advanced features to simplify the stage manager's task. For an alternative, **EUROLITE** seem to be thinking on similar lines. **FUTURE FILM DEVELOPMENTS**, another newcomer to the show, also stocks a wide range of audio and video connectors and patching systems, microphones, headphones and intercom systems. For those who prefer to hire, **MAC SOUND** returned to the show after a brief absence caused by having had too much work on hand last year.

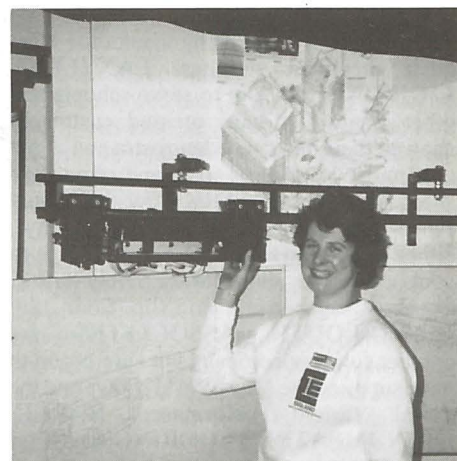
Machinery

Despite the continuing absence of the manufacturers of the bigger items of stage machinery, enthusiasts for moving scenery were offered a novelty by **TRIPLE E Ltd** who have pioneered many new ideas in recent years. This company has now successfully harnessed the linear electric motor to drive curtains and the like and



Turbosound acoustically treated sound booth for demonstrating loudspeakers.

demonstrated with impressive ease how smooth, powerful and controllable the device can be. Linked to the inevitable computer, speed and position for a multitude of tracks can be marshalled with a fluidity that was once the monopoly of lighting effects. With commendable caution, hand operating lines are fitted as what lighting have learned to call back-up. Pursuing the theme, **TRIPLE E** has also developed a friction drive curtain winch and a suitcase



Triple E Ltd. Linear motor unit in position on curtain track.

track-in-a-box kit for touring. Another computer making it's first public appearance was the **AVOLITES** chain hoist controller able to store 100 deads and move cues for up to 30 independent hoists identified by name or in plan on a VDU and with convincing safety procedures. For the more conservative, **HALL STAGE PRODUCTS** have introduced a new compact curtain track, a new curtain winch unit with longer travel and infinitely variable speed control and a new range of machined gear hoists. Completely un-computerised, **SUFFOLK SCENERY**, UK distributors for Foy Invention Enterprises, showed curtain systems and the **FOY** people flying effects. And, as everyone knows, **RADCLIFFE TRANSPORT** are experts at moving scenery in their big red vans, both at home and abroad.

Material, Props. and Paint

P L PARSONS, suppliers of scenic metal-work, again showed their 'Steeldeck' range of metal rostra frames designed to fit onto standard scaffold tube legs. **A S GREEN** of Lancashire offer specialised wooden rostra made in their own workshops, and will design, install and maintain complete



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