

# Talking Shop

R.M.HARRIS

Some nine years ago, when the author joined Strand most of our sales were dispatched from our Kennington Depot. Then, of course, we moved to Scotland but a much greater change in the pattern of trading has taken place within the last four years. Now a very considerable proportion of our goods are sold "over the counter" to customers who call and collect. Probably the main reason for this change has been the vast increase in carriage costs but it may also have to do with people actually wanting to see equipment and examine it before making a purchase particularly now we are introducing a new lantern almost every four weeks!

To help this policy forward just over a year ago we opened a new sales shop to serve the East Midlands at Coalville in Leicester and in about a months time we shall be opening a new sales shop in Bristol.

We also of course, have our stockists in Edinburgh, Birmingham, Exeter, Batley, Sunderland, Cardiff and the West End of London. Each of these sales shops and our stockists, have a stock of about £20,000.00 worth of Strand Equipment and spares and our enquiries and research indicate that this local level of supplies and service is just what our customers most need.

The Coalville sales shop, as will Bristol

when it is open, has a full range of smaller package control systems, Mini 2's and Micro 8's, plus all the popular lanterns including batterns and floats as well as the complete range of cinemoid, lamps and packaged spares.

There is a demonstration area at Coalville as there will be in Bristol, with all popular lanterns and controls rigged and working so that customers can see if the equipment is exactly right for the job they have in mind and as at all our sales shops and stockists, knowledgeable people are available to discuss equipment and problems.

With the recruitment of our latest stockists, "Northern Lighting" who are situated in Sunderland we have closed the last but one gap in our distribution system. We have been looking for a long time now for someone who could be a distributor for East Anglia, ideally based in Norwich and perhaps if any reader is interested they will contact me!

To sum up, although the professional theatre is the heart of Strand's business much of its soul is with schools and amateur societies throughout the country. Although these users can often only afford a few spots and a Mini 2 they have one common quality, enthusiasm and a wish for the best.

*The author is manager, International Sales for Rank Strand Electric.*

## *An open letter to Mr. John Schwiller in reply to his "Blinded by Science."*

It is gratifying to find you in agreement with our observation that zoom system units are longer than fixed focus units designed for the shorter throw. Certainly no one will object to future improvements if the laws of optics are repealed by new findings.

Commenting on "cosine distribution" you introduce the word "optimum." The article, "Choosing a Spotlight" refers to "an arbitrary distribution of intensity" not optimum. The pattern had its origin in an analysis of that intensity distribution most desired by designers and theatre technicians. It is the author's purpose to give it specific definition, to free it from individual interpretation. It is suggested as a possible base for a standard so that all of this type unit might be cross-compared while producing the same pattern of intensities. It has a further advantage in that, when a multiplicity of units are overlapped so the beams, (the 50% of peak angles), just touch, the illumination through the centres of the circles across the stage will be quite uniform. A paper in preparation, "Using Your Spotlight" contains additional details of this proposal.

With respect to spotlights with an adjustable pattern of distribution your editing of the paragraph provokes the comment, - "not quite cricket." the full paragraph follows:

Recent advertising has emphasized a variable lamp position, by means of which the distribution of intensity across the field may be varied. It provides a range from a "hot" center to an approximate "cosine distribution." If the conditions of use are not known and if the spotlight may have to serve at longer throws or smaller areas of high intensity this feature has merit. Only the trained operator will utilize its full advantage. The average user, often a student with little or no experience, will more often have the unit at a wrong setting and not know the proper procedure to correct it. Units located in a fixed position and filling a routine purpose do not require such adjustability, even though experts may find it worthwhile.

The key is knowledge gained from experience or instruction to enable the student to acquire expertise, and such instruction can hardly be regarded as "condescending."

Finally, your closing sentence, "As Louis Erhardt says, care in selection of equipment can mean a lifetime of excellent service, particularly if we do not let ourselves be blinded by science." The actual quotation:

Care in the selection of equipment can mean a lifetime of excellent service, coupled with a reasonable price at the time of purchase.

Leads one to wonder who is blinded, - and certainly not by science.

Louis Erhardt  
3118, Village Three, Camarillo, California.

*Author of "Choosing a Spotlight" and "Radiation, Light, and Illumination." Consultant to Strand Century Inc.*

## CORRESPONDENCE

*From Mr. Roger Edwards*

Dear Sir,  
As the Administrator and person responsible for programming a multi-purpose theatre building can I voice support for your Summer issue editorial. I must add, however, that it is too late. The last ten to fifteen years have seen a boom in the building of new theatres (or entertainment complexes) unlike any time since the turn of the century. It is unlikely with the costs now involved that buildings will continue to appear at such a rate in future years. Of these new theatres so many are fraught with design faults causing operational problems which I blame on the industry not being strong enough in offering wise considered advice to the builders - Often local authorities who committed their particular projects as a prestige exercise as opposed to meeting a proven need - In all probability this may well have meant a number of second thoughts but hopefully the projects that did continue would not have had some of the problems that we can see around the country.  
For the future no doubt the call is going to be multi-use but in achieving that end let us apply one simple rule of thumb. It is possible to do classical concerts in a conventional theatre (I know there are difficulties of sound) but its much harder to do theatre in a concert hall. Accepting that as a basic premise the design can proceed from there. I believe the article by the late Geoff Berry in your current issue about Assisted Resonance is one way of achieving multi-use with a variable acoustic

performance which when coupled with moving auditorium walls, whether up and down or in and out, can achieve the variations of audience sighting to suit the different styles of presentation. The moving wall can also be of benefit in overcoming the problem of a big auditorium, which is required for the economic presentation of big concert attractions, and the avoidance of acres of empty seats when in a mixed programme building the minority interest audiences are being catered to. I know this is a total anathema to your previous editor, Frederick Bentham, who believes seats are there to sell.

That of course is extremely laudable as an ideal but it is a fact of life in many situations that the programme has to cater to minority tastes because public money is involved and that not all seats can be sold, in which case it must surely be preferable to hide the unsold seats. Any hint of empty capacity can soon generate a negative failure attitude on the public part, which can go some way to making a struggling theatre struggle even more.

Lets look forward to many more new Centres for entertainment but let us all make sure that the errors already perpetrated are not repeated.

Yours faithfully,  
ROGER EDWARDS  
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Hayes, Middlesex.