

Galaxy at it's finest

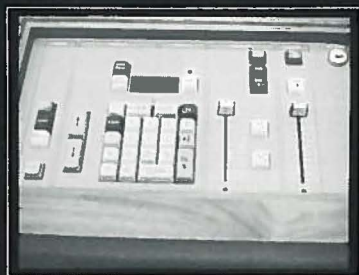
by the Editor

Of the many systems Strand have built over their 70 years I suppose each generation in the company have their own particular favourites.

The choice is either because of the circumstances, for example the first ever Light Console which was installed in Lisbon during the war or perhaps because of the fame of the location - the DDM at La Scala Milan is a good example here. In my own time I remember the very fine top specification MMS sold by Alan Luxford to Glyndebourne about seven years ago.

The very best installations have one thing in common. They are specified as a result of talking between the people who are going to use the system - or their consultants - and the company selected to build them.

Systems that arise out of a specification intended to allow competitive tendering are invariably committee designed camels. I can think of some horrendous examples. Why then did we build them? I suppose the short answer is that if we didn't someone else would. When this



situation arises the only thing to do is grin, bear it and ring up the cash register. It will be our only pleasure.

Now, however, it is my pride and delight to illustrate what is probably our finest Galaxy yet. Destined for the Oslo Concert Hall, and being supplied through Elpag, our long time Norwegian agents.

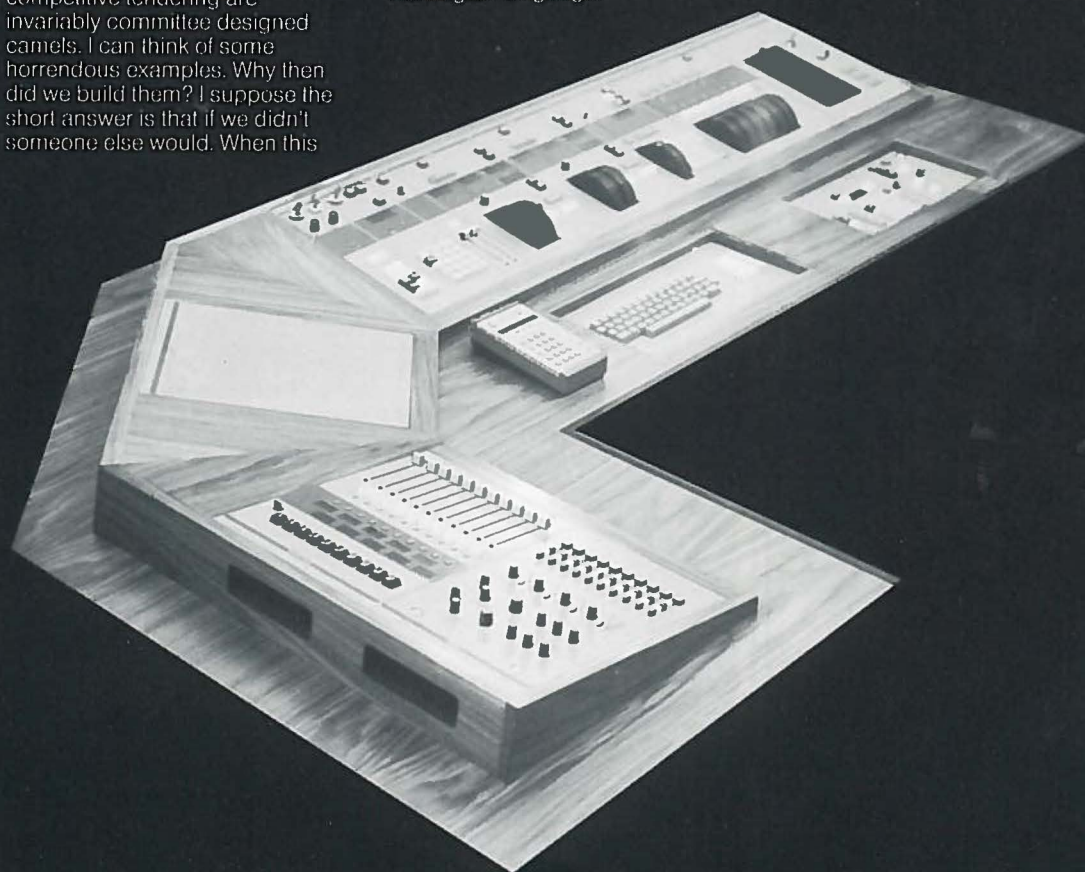
The specification is absolutely top class no holds barred 1984 Galaxy at its very finest. 240 Channels, special desk designed to fit the existing control room, buttons engraved in Norwegian, V.D.U. colour display, also in Norwegian language.

The standard stalls control pod is provided. Standard? Do I detect the reader's eyebrow lifting a millimetre? Yes - standard because the standard offering does everything the most sophisticated user could need.

There is an infra red designers hand held control (channel and memory selection, record and playback). To ice the cake the Amazon basin was looted of some of its finest hardwood to make a desk worthy of the technology.

Memory back up is by the most advanced of Galaxy arrangements. As the desk is used the whole lighting action is automatically and continuously followed in a totally separate electronic system. Should a component fail, the press of a button simply switches the output from the main systems to the back up.

Anyhow, the editorial Pentax has tried to bring some feeling of the quality and the general "rightness" of the system to justify to our readers our own pride in the finest Galaxy yet. ■



A few weeks ago the Editor telephoned me and asked if we had done any interesting school contracts recently. "Well, I can think of two schools in interesting places", I replied having just travelled to the Isles of Barra and Shetland.

Many people in the south of England who are not sure what happens north of Watford, have never travelled north of Hadrian's Wall and have probably never heard of the Antonine Wall, do not realise how large an area Scotland covers. It is about 400 miles by road from John O'Groats to the border - roughly the same distance as London to Glasgow, and that is only the mainland!

The schools I am writing about are not on the mainland however and to get to them one has the pleasure of flying by Loganair, a Scottish airline which among its many routes flies the shortest scheduled flight in the world, 2 minutes between islands in Orkney, a distance shorter than the main runway at Heathrow. Their flight timetable has some fascinating footnotes - for example "Request Stop Only" - one has visions of City gents with rolled umbrellas stopping a passing plane.

But first to Barra, where the timetable advises that flight times are dependent on the tides at Barra. Barra is a small island lying about 80 miles west of the Scottish mainland, in the outer Hebrides.

One fine day last summer I left Glasgow in the company of John Whitaker of Theatre Projects Consultants, to commission the technical equipment at Castlebay Community School. Somewhere over the Firth of Lorn the pilot turned round and handed John a map. "We're lost" I thought and whilst I had faith in John's theatrical ability I wasn't too sure about his navigation. I needn't have worried - its just that Loganair pilots are friendly souls and thought we would be interested in picking out the islands we were flying over. A few minutes later we were landing at Barra airport - on the beach where fortunately the tide was out. Everytime I have been to Barra, the sun has shone, but I am assured that it is not always so, and one can believe it. The island is lashed by Atlantic gales and there are few trees to be seen. The houses themselves appear to be huddled into the hills against the storms.

Castlebay is the only town on the island where the new Community School has been built. The school has been designed so that it can be used by the local community outwith school hours. It is a single storey steel frame building, tucked into the hillside