

# M24

M24, Strand's new affordable memory system went into full production on 18th July 1983. Up to today - Jan 30th 1984 - 195 systems have been sold. This covers 196 days but as we have only sold 195 I think it reasonable that Christmas Day should have been our day off.

No memory system has ever sold in anything approaching this quantity. For example, MMS, which we considered a very successful system, sold but 230 units in over six years.



**"TO BOLDLY GO. . ."**  
... where no memory has gone before.



by Graham Walne

I may paraphrase Captain Kirk, that is surely the destiny of M24 and RADA's new installation is likely to be typical of many that will follow. After all, the British Isles possesses over 1200 venues, the majority of which are still without a memory control and have less than 60 ways. Ideal M24 territory.

In RADA's case the decision was carefully made. Training establishments' choice of equipment must reflect what the students expect to meet outside and RADA has always been reluctant to give up manual control in favour of 100% memory. Their first memory installation, in the Vanbrugh Theatre, was MMS and the story of this is well documented in a previous Tabs (summer 76 volume 34 no 2) by

Francis Reid, who was at that time the Academy's lighting tutor. I am happy to have assumed that role and to document the second installation.

This is located in the remodelled GBS theatre which is now a useful studio space seating 150 with much improved control suite in place of the tiny circle. Dimming capacity has been increased from 20 to 40 ways and a new Tempus 2 preset desk was selected. It was then appreciated that the cost of adding memory was so reasonable that it would have been foolish to ignore it. Thus the training can provide both options, memory and manual. This is more important than many perhaps realise. In one of my recent weekend courses one delegate expressed the hope that his memory system wouldn't break down because he had never worked a manual desk and didn't know how to plot.

Although RADA is not training lighting designers but stage managers it is obviously useful for them to appreciate other's problems and so many shows are plotted and operated by the students. The staff estimate that M24 needs 3 hours training for a student to become proficient, not bad I would have thought for so versatile a system.

One aspect which is hard to grasp however is the "move fade" mode as an alternative to the "cross fade", mode which is the more traditional. In the move fade only the instructions to dimmers which alter are recorded, not those to dimmers which are static. This saves memory capacity. This way of working was

primarily introduced with Light Palette and is a standard option on Galaxy. Personally I'll stick with crossfades but it is remarkable to find both options in so reasonably priced a system.

Another asset is the ability to record both build and fade rates as different times and further to set up six simultaneous fades all at different times. RADA have found this especially useful where sunsets need to be interrupted with "spot" cues as lamps are switched on.

So far RADA's M24 has behaved itself with the exception of one gala performance when garbage filled the screen. (When else!) The trouble was traced to a probable loose plug and it is worth noting that where memory systems become more portable much greater reliance is placed on the connections, and on those who undertake the installation. M24 does possess a trouble-shooting program which enables the operator to test out all the functions and pinpoint likely trouble spots and only time will tell just how useful this will be.

The M24 has given RADA simultaneously the chance to offer wider training in lighting control and also the opportunity of bringing more sophisticated effects into the GBS theatre. In an age when memory systems are predictable I found at RADA some excitement. ■

## M24 AT THE MITCHELL



by Gail Hardman

"Flexible!" "Exciting!" "Phenomenal!" "Opening New Horizons. . ." - just some of the compliments showered on the Mitchell Memorial Youth Theatre's new M24 lighting control system by its operators.

THE theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, opened in 1957 by Douglas Bader as a memorial to R.J. Mitchell, designer of the Spitfire, is used for eleven months of the year by local drama groups, operatic societies, Scouts and so on, with an annual drama festival during the summer. This beautiful 380-seat theatre in the heart of the Potteries is so popular and well-used that bookings already extend well into 1985.

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