

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of Tabs is in recognition of the tremendous amount of business for British theatre and TV technical products that is achieved overseas.

In Strand's case this is especially true of the old Empire countries – going back of course to 1776 when America came off the rails, but still follows the Strand (or rather Strand Century) path for theatre lighting equipment.

Just as Strand is the largest supplier of this equipment in the UK so are Strand companies or agents in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA and Germany.

We read so often of areas where other countries are supposed to be trouncing the British, it perhaps does no harm to reflect for a moment on a reverse situation.

Readers will be sorry (I hope) to learn that for this issue I have laid aside, almost totally, both the editorial pen and Pentax to leave the field clear for overseas authors. I have included Iain Mackintosh's contribution on the Wilde Theatre, basically because I like the theatre so much, just as I like the work of its namesake. Nor could I resist a small obeisance in the direction of ENVIRON, my own special baby, in the shape of the crystal lit luxury of the London Hilton lobby. I found I was equally tempted by Gail Hardman's contribution – mainly because we don't hear enough about the technical side of school productions, but in all other areas your servant has, for once, held his peace.



The discreet black coated servant behind the Hilton lobby glitter. Lighting control by Environ 2. Photograph by courtesy of Arnold Montrose Decorative Lighting of London.

STRAND'S 70TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

Our photo was taken at the Cafe Royal last year during the celebration party. Leading Lights of the technical theatre and television gathered to raise a glass to another Seventy Years at the Top.

Two main memories have lodged in the Editorial cranium. First, a magnificent cake, shaped, colour iced and pushbutton adorned representing a full size M24. Let any reader who may have visions of gargantuan extravagance pause to reflect both on how compact is the modern lighting memory system.

The second memory is of four TABS editors all in a row and all holding glasses. Fred Bentham, Francis Reid, Phil Rose and the present incumbent. I did think of printing the resultant photos but I considered our readers have probably endured a surfeit of editorial likenesses, and four at a time might be rather too much.



Celebrating the Birthday and pictured here are (l to r) Tom Malarkey, Director of Halls and Theatre, Glasgow; Michael Lowe, Managing Director, Rank Strand; Richard Pilbrow, Chairman, Theatre Projects; Ray Grove, Technical Manager, Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne; Russell Dunsire, Manager of UK Sales, Rank Strand.



A CHRONOLOGY OF SOME STRAND FIRSTS



Trafalgar Square, 1916.

1914 Strand Electric begins as an office with workshop in Garrick Yard St. Martin's Lane in the heart of London's theatreland.

1918 The theatre electricians Arthur Earnshaw (Duke of York's) and Phillip Sheridan (Strand Theatre) who founded the firm are joined by Moss Mansell a manufacturer of arc resistances and dimmers in Cecil Court.

1922 *Round in Fifty* at the London Hippodrome launches the Sunray compartment batten to become the backbone of any Strand installation. The use of these with filters instead of colour-dipped lamps was essential to Adrian Samoiloff's scenic tricks using complementary colours.

1924 The Old Vic of Lilian Baylis: Strand's first 'dead front' switchboard: hitherto in those DC days the contacts and busbars had been mounted on the front of polished slate panels.

The Shepherds Bush Pavilion (to become the Gaumont then the Odeon): the first of the great (3000-seat) Super Cinemas with full stage lighting and concealed colour-change lighting around the auditorium.

1929 Moss Mansell patents his Magnetic Clutch and makes possible Strand's unique contributions to compact remote control of lighting.

1930 The new Adelphi opens with 'Ever Green' and a new installation by Strand: lighting of this cyclorama show is from floods and spots instead of the then staple, Sunray compartment battens.

Locarno Ballroom Streatham, a new dance hall wired and equipped with architectural colour lighting by Strand.

1931 'Waltzes from Vienna' Strand's massed spots on the circle front and on stage as used by Hassard Short are a first at the Alhambra.

1932 The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon: the only 'modern' theatre built in Britain between the Wars with the facilities FOH and backstage we have come to expect today. Stage lighting included Stelmars out front, cyclorama colour-mixing and a 56-way Grand Master board (Strand's second, the first was in Halifax the previous year).

Strand move the Works from Floral Street Covent Garden to a new factory in Gunnersbury.



The sign that was never invoiced, 1926.

1926 C. B. Cochran's Revues at the London Pavilion, which included 'One Dam Thing After Another' and Coward's 'This Year of Grace'. A famous and long-standing Piccadilly Circus landmark produced by Strand was the illuminated façade of the London Pavilion proclaiming 'The Centre of the World!' Incidentally the sign was never paid for as Strand company forgot to invoice it.

1928 The new Savoy opens with the D'Oyly Carte 'Gondoliers' under Malcolm Sargent and a new electrical and lighting installation by Strand. Stelmar ellipsoidal spot patent applied for; Strand now set to make the first 1kW and 500W ellipsoidal profile spots for the stage in the world.

1933 Strand's first demonstration theatre (in Floral Street) is opened by Cochran and used by Fred Bentham for Colour Music and as a R & D lab.

1935 Hassard Short's 'Stop Press': a revue whose lighting effects heralded a 'new era' although it was the last to have to depend on the 'old' range of traditional Strand focus lamps for those effects.

The Strand Light Console is inaugurated with a recital of Colour Music in the Floral Street theatre and makes the National press. It was the first lighting control in the World to use not merely a moveable console but the organ principle of Select & Play, the common basis for today's numeric Memory control systems.