

although you can build a lighting state on it. Very useful for a repertory theatre with daily changeovers or houses with small crews that can't afford to loose someone on the board all the time.

So there it was. Memoria 80 surprised me. When I had to buy the memory board for LCDT three years ago – there were two in the running – now it's almost too much of a choice. Now I would have great difficulty in making my pick from the controls I saw at Warwick that day.

Is it time now for the manufacturers to look to other sides of our trade that could be improved? What about someone developing an automatic lantern-focusing device that we can all afford – not just the Germans? Or a new lightweight dimmer that could be part of the lantern and controlled by multi-plexed signals? Or how about the colour filter that changes colour depending on the signal you send it and so on. The trouble is that the time saved in lighting and plotting by the memory system has now been taken up by the larger rigs, and more adventurous sets, etc. It would be nice to see advances on some other sides of lighting NOW.

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Sound Futures

JOHN A. LEONARD

'When,' I am often asked, 'is theatre sound control going to catch up with theatre lighting control?' Until recently, the answer was, 'By the looks of things at the moment, never.' Manufacturers of mixing desks for theatre use were few and far between, and the commonest sight in a theatre sound control room was a modified P.A. or recording studio desk; a ten into four, maybe, with a clumsy and cumbersome speaker switching matrix tacked onto the output stage. 100 volt line transmission to speakers was the norm, very often utilising step down transformers that were designed for public address systems where high intelligibility rather than high fidelity was the overriding factor: yet at either end of these makeshift controls one could find high quality equipment. The Revox A77 tape machine, Quad and H-H amplifiers, Tannoy, Bose, and Altec speakers, studio quality microphones, and broadcast quality transcription decks, arms and cartridges for disc reproduction, were then, as now, standard items to be found in any self-respecting theatre sound control room. All capable of providing far greater flexibility and higher quality than the control equipment would allow. All was not lost, however; for a small band of sound technicians were rapidly becoming increasingly frustrated with the limited range of control equipment available to them, and were turning to custom building to provide the facilities that were so badly needed. Ian Gibson and Audio Developments produced the desk for the Manchester Royal Exchange, Theatre Projects and Alice (Stancoil), equipped the new National Theatre sound control rooms,



The Libra theatre sound console.

and the prototype of what was to become the Libra System, was being assembled in Bristol, with the help of Helios Electronics. Bill Graham and David Collison were sorting out the final details of the computer assisted desk that is soon to be installed at the Barbican Centre, and this marked a small but fairly important step in the development of theatre sound control.

'Computer Assisted' Lighting boards had been around for ten years, and developing rapidly from their early, slightly cumbersome format. The MMS and Q File systems were being seen in more and more lighting control rooms, as theatre managements committed themselves to the comparatively large capital outlay. In recording studios, the automated mixing desk was also making

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