PRODUCT NEWS

INTERNATIONAL TV SYMPOSIUM and EXHIBITION

Montreux 81 was the biggest yet, and an extension of the exhibition site allowed a record number of more than 200 exhibitors. The symposium also attracted about 1900 delegates which is again a record for this biennial event. As regards visitors, the saturation of hotel and restaurant facilities told its own story, and due to late booking, at least one British exhibitor was faced with a 20 mile commuting exercise into the mountains — highly panoramic but quite an ordeal after a tiring day on the stand.

Among the products exhibited, video recorders and digital programme handling equipment were well to the fore and in the former connection it is fascinating to observe the enormous advances made since the early days of bulky and decidedly jittery VTR machines. Equally, digital video processing techniques can not only preserve the quality of the transmitted image, but also offer mind boggling possibilities in pattern generation and visual trickery.

Coming closer to home as far as this journal is concerned, stage and studio lighting was represented by a mere handful of exhibitors. Notably absent for the first time was the Thorn Theatre Lighting Division which, as readers are probably aware, ceased trading on March 31st of this year. This closure, made for topical financial reasons, has marked the end of an era which commenced with Q-File in 1967. This was the world's first fully electronic memory system and the archetype of today's lighting control philosophy. Past Montreux exhibitions saw the appearance of many more Thorn inspired 'firsts', and the microprocessor based Thornlite was a feature of the last Montreux in 1979.

ADB were also absent, and the field was dominated by the British companies of Rank Strand, Dynamic Technology and Lion Lighting Systems which is a newly formed concern of which more will be said later. The **Siemens** stand included a Sitralux K lighting desk among a wide variety of other broadcasting equipments. Another German company, **Kobold Licht,** was showing a range of HMI units and portable lighting equipment for professional and home use. Portability was also the theme of **Lowel-Light Manufacturing Inc.** the sole representatives of the USA in the lighting field.

Regrettably, details of the last two exhibitors were not acquired due to time limitations.

INNOVATIONS

While exhibitors in this field were very few, the equipment shown provided further dramatic evidence of the potential of the ubiquitous microprocessor. Imagine a situation where, when you call up a memory, details of the corresponding action cue appear in words on the VDU screen. Or a system in which one can record not only the channel level but the optimum dimmer law required for any channel. These are just two of the impressive new features offered by the latest version of the **Rank Strand** Galaxy control desk. First exhibited in July of last year, Galaxy now has an alpha-numeric keyboard which allows the operator to record text information such as cue titles or any other message or instruction. The claim of a major breakthrough is also backed up by new operational facilities such as the ability to key-in channel to dimmer patching information, channel to master grouping, and the designation of non-dim circuits. Dimmer law is defined by keying in the percentage coordinates of the required control curve.

Based on modules of 48 channels, Galaxy has a maximum capacity of 720 channels and up to 10,000 CMOS memory locations. Ferrite memories are available on option.

Rank Strand were also showing their Satellite microprocessor based 'package' control system, and a range of luminaires of which two at least warrant special mention. Altair is a compact and robust lantern designed to take advantage of the new high efficiency CID discharge lamps. Available in 1000 watts and 2500 watt versions, Altair has an effective light to power ratio four times better than that of traditional sources. Incidentally, CID stands for 'compact iodide daylight' and is a development arising from the CSI or 'compact source iodine' lamp.

Kahoutek, named after the comet, is a dual source fresnel spotlight and soft light with all mechanical adjustments motorised for remote control. While not new in principle, this is perhaps the first really practical remotely manipulated source with neat, quiet running motors controlling pan, tilt, focus, individual barn door flap angle and barn door mounting ring rotation. Other remote control facilities are soft or spot changeover, lamp wattage selection and on/off.

Following the exhibition we understand that no less that 264 Kahoutek luminaires have been ordered by the ZDF German television company.

The **Dynamic Technology** stand featured their new modular Datalite lighting control desk plus a range of advanced television signal processing and information handling equipments.

Its modular concept now allows Datalite to accommodate up to three channel controllers, up to three playbacks and a choice of six or ten wheel type group masters. From a constructional viewpoint it is interesting to note that its designers have reverted to the earlier technique of separating the desk from its associated electronic hardware. The control console thus contains a minimum of electronic elements, and is coupled via a twisted pair data link to a compact central processing unit which may be up to 500 metres distant.

The channel capacity can be tailored between 120 and an inherent maximum of over 1000. Upwards of 400 solid state memories can be provided, with optional floppy disk library storage. As with the Rank Strand Galaxy, the memories avoid wasted information capacity by pooling all bits not acutally used in a given memory file. The effective number of memories thus varies with their individual content and the number remaining available is constantly displayed.

Other features shared with Galaxy include 'soft-patching' by which a random selection of dimmers can be assigned to a smaller number of control channels. When recording lighting controlled by group masters, recall of the resulting memory also restores the assignment of channels to the original group control wheels.

The memories include fade times, and can be linked for automatic recall in any predetermined order. In combination, these two facilities offer the interesting possibility of an inherent special effects routine with continuous automatic recycling of flash and fade sequences.

In addition to its subtle operational possibilities, Datalite makes dramatically effective use of its visual display unit which provides very comprehensive operator information. With monochrome monitors, such data can be confusing, but in this instance clarity is assured by a full colour display in eight different hues.

Even more impressive is the use of the VDU' as a 'geographic' mimic showing the state of the individual light sources in their correct physical positions on a simulated floor plan. To show the necessary detail, it is normally necessary to switch the display to cover the area in section like the pages of a map. Datalite elegantly avoids this inconvenience by providing a joystick control which can move the floor plan in any direction and thus enable any portion of it to appear on the display.

Sales of the new Datalite system have already reached 13.

While a new name in the television field, **Lion Lighting Systems** has an authoritative link with the industry through the personage of Derek Lightbody, the well known ex-member of the BBC's lighting equipment design team. Having spent many years in studio engineering, Derek has applied his experience to the design both of a control desk, and the first of a proposed new range of highly imaginative luminaires.

The control sytstem, provisionally named 'Lightime', is unashamedly based on Q-File, for which the BBC was Thorn's first customer in 1967. Despite the passage of years, many of the Corporation's lighting people have remained convinced that the basic Q-File philosophy has never been bettered, and Lightime is an endeavour to update the original concept and to endow it with the modern advantages made possible by microprocessor technology. The fundamental principle is that of an output and a preset store, each with its own master