

CONTROL BOARD ALPHABET

Continuing Francis Reid's ABC for 1987

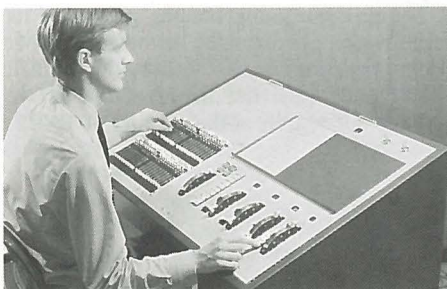


is how we write the cues (qv) which are so fundamental to theatre that they inspire the title of this magazine. The recording and repeatability of lighting cues has been so revolutionised by data processing that two of the most evocative names ever given to boards are still Thorn's **Q-File**



Q-File

and **Q-Master**. Q-File was before the wheel. Channel access was digital but level selection was by a single analogue lever whose servo-motor permitted the selected live channel to be accurately but rapidly matched to its current memorised level prior to modification. Q-Master had an analogue lever per channel, and prior to modification, a channel's lever had to set at its current recorded level with the aid of a pilot light, before flicking a switchlet to gain manual control.



Q-Master

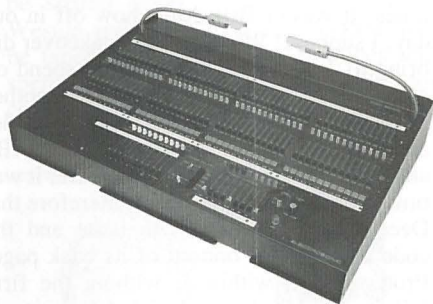


is for the **Racks** in which the dimmers are mounted in the dimmer room to distribute electricity to the lights in accordance with instructions received from the operators fingers playing on the board's control surfaces. All dimmers have a **rating**, formerly always expressed in watts but increasingly now in amps, which indicates the maximum load that they will control. When the dimmer was **resistance** it required loading up to its rating to function properly, but all modern dimmers and the

more sophisticated of the ancient ones, are able to handle every load from a very few watts up to their rated maximum.

Relays were the backbone of remote control in pre-electronic days. Banks of basic post-office relays selected channels and polarised relays transmitted levels. The climax of relay technology was probably the Compton organ system which could capture groups of channels for memorised recall.

A hand held **rigger's control** allows dimmers to be activated during rigging and focussing without the need for a board operator to be present in the control room. Rigger's controls may transmit their information by wire or be wireless.



Electrosonic's 1977 **ROCKBOARD** became the generic name for boards planned to offer maximum designer/operator playability in production situations where a completely pre-recorded plot is inappropriate.

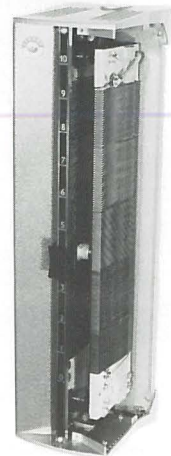
Rockboards allow designer-operators maximum freedom and flexibility in creating and playing instant light during a performance. These boards usually allow access to all channels at all times via dimming faders and switching pushes. Effects facilities include complex flash and chase programmes.



is for **Switchboard** perhaps a misnomer when the key function of a board is to dim rather than to switch. However, with modern thyristor dimmers working as ultra-rapid switchers, perhaps an old word has a new life. These thyristors were originally called **SCRs (Silicon Controlled Rectifiers)**. Such **semi-conductor** dimmers are **solid state** and free from the movement associated with resistance and transformer dimmers which had to be activated directly by hand or through motors, clutches and relays.

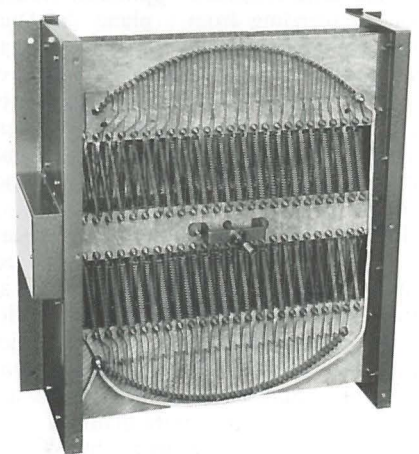
Solid state dimming has made **servo** motors redundant in boards for intensity control but they are alive and well in remotely positioned and focussed spot-lights. Organ **stopkeys** were the elegantly

playable means of selecting channels to move in the Light Console (qv) and C.D. (qv)



Slider Dimmer (with Scale)

The simplest moving dimmer was the **slider** making a direct contact with a portion of the continuous resistance winding, whereas the more sophisticated **stud-contact** type had a series of individual resistances selected by a sweeping arm. Strand's **Sunset** dimmers were stud-contact, often wall mounted for houselights or incorporated in bracket handle (qv) boards.



Stud Contact Sunset Dimmer

The commonest dimmer **scale** has always been 0-10 and, despite a computer board's preference for displaying percentages, many older designers still call for twenty seven at point five rather than fifty percent. The really old 'uns tend to call for twenty seven at a half because they date from an era when, although most dimmers had ten-point scales, it was optimistic to hope for even quarter, half and threequarters on a very fast show. On the fastest shows it needed some luck to get total accuracy on full and out;