

A TECHNICAL EVALUATION

BY BOB ANDERSON

Two decades ago the entertainment lighting world woke up to the idea that the computer industry could offer exciting ideas to replace the cumbersome mixtures of mechanical drives, multilever presetting, and analogue mastering that were the best the lighting industry could then provide for dimmer control. The prospect fascinated many excellent minds. After years of research, today's lighting designers have the choice of many alternative solutions. Notable among the leaders are the controls produced in Sweden by the Avab team.

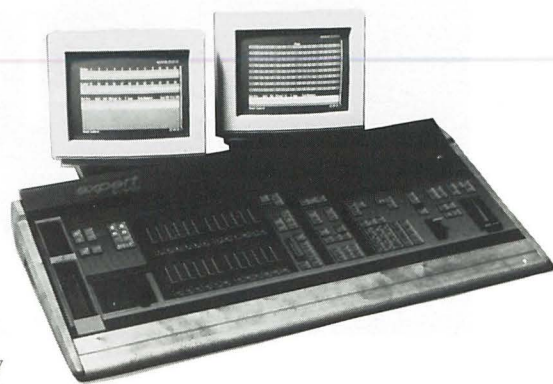
Avab Elektronik AB was founded in 1971 and was, and is, to quote their company profile, "dedicated to the design, manufacturing, and installation of state-of-the-art lighting control systems, luminaires, rigging control systems, and stage machinery for theatres." Their first notable design was AVAB 2000 which was launched in 1975, followed by 2001 two years later, and in 1981, the classic modular Viking system.

By 1981 the world leaders had pro-

duced many top specification computer-based lighting control systems. In Germany, Siemens had Sitalux, in the USA, Kliegl Brothers had the Performer series, and Strand Century had launched Light Palette, and in Britain, Rank Strand had progressed from DDM through MMS to Lightboard.

AVAB's Viking was designed to beat all these.

At this time, all mainstream lighting control thinking was based on theatre traditions. Create, experiment, rehearse, and refine — then, with all decisions committed to memory, perform the cues over and over again without variation. Control panels therefore divided naturally into separate sections for creating lighting looks, memorising the results, and performing the cues. The Viking design presented these as self-contained plug-in modules (as MMS had done before) that could be laid out on the control desk in any order. The system used keypad digital call-up for dimmer channels and wheel level adjustment and could accept two crossfade modules and three mixer mod-



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ules and control up to 1,000 independent dimmers. Two types of performance modules were offered — a cross fade unit that progressed through cues in sequence, and a mixer unit with four controls for mixing and balancing memories. Two decisions were made, essential to the mode of operation, which distinguish the AVAB range from other designs. The outputs from the cross fade units and mixers combine with "highest precedence" logic, and control button operating sequences

Viking² offers the best that Swedish ingenuity can devise for controlling the large numbers of dimmers in theatres, opera houses, and TV studios.

that obey the "reverse Polish" notation. These decisions have been applied consistently on all AVAB systems and determine many of their strength and peculiarities.

Also, unique to Viking was "The Voice of the Viking!" — an electronically synthesized speech output that chanted, "Are you sure?" or other robot-like



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