

MILESTONES

IN LIGHTING HISTORY

1951

Royal Festival Hall, London - the only permanent building to remain from the 'Festival of Britain', was equipped by Strand with a Light Console, and a complete lighting installation including long-range colour change spots. This led to the request for a 'duplicate' installation in Venezuela - at the Aula Magna in Caracas.

1952

Strand's first branch office in Australia: 481 Malvern Road, South Yarra was the address and Alec Brown, ex chief of the London Coliseum, was the boss, with a small group of the crew from an Australian tour of "Oklahoma!" which he had master-minded prior to the Strand opportunity.



Pattern 23 with the 'new' book clamp.

Strand Archive.

1953

The most famous number in Stage Lighting - the Patt 23 is born. Strand's first die-cast aluminium stage lantern. Easily the most popular single unit ever produced by Strand Electric in the UK, with over half a million sold until production ceased in 1983.

1954


Strand's King Street Demonstration Theatre re-opened, where it became the Mecca for stage lighting demonstrations and lectures until 1977.

1955

Gerd Ohlmer, a travelling salesman for Diedr. Buschmann of Brunswick (his family's pharmaceutical company) wrote to Strand with an interest in selling colour filters to opera and ballet companies. By the end of the year he had established an official branch - Strand Electric-Hessenbruch.

Also in 1955, the last Light Console was manufactured - for Theatre Polski in Warsaw.

1959

Strand starts up in Canada (see Philip Rose's article on page 8). In the UK the smallest and best event in the history of Stage Lighting: Strand launches the hook clamp and frees the theatre from the old 2 nut and 2 bolt L-clamp. A little more high-tech was the demonstration of the prototype thyristor dimmer and a punched card 'memory' system (KTV or "Klonk") to the Society of TV Lighting Directors at the King Street Demonstration Theatre. 

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FREDBENTHAM


WHAT NEXT?

Looking back just 21 years of Strand's 80 years I discovered a thought provoking editorial in my last TABS (Vol. 31 No.3 1973) under the title "Entente Cordiale".

Here is its first paragraph: "When entertaining the technical staff of the Comedie Francaise during their recent visit to London, of all the delights we set before them (including Colour Music!) nothing received greater approbation than a jar of English pickled onions. This must not be taken simply as indicating a very low standard for the rest of our entertainment. Au contraire as they might say on their side of La Manche, everything we did was received with enthusiasm and it was a heart-warming occasion all round. Nevertheless, while fond of an occasional pickled onion ourselves we never for a moment suspected that the content of a standard jar purchased across the grocer's counter or removed from the supermarket shelf could invoke cusinary rapture in anyone - let alone the French. Yet here it appeared was the dish or rather the jar for the gourmet."

It is intriguing that 'my' editorial goes on then to remark that on the radio there had been "a tale of an EEC committee which for some years now had been endeavouring to standardise on a

formula for a European pickled onion. Needless to say this was to be quite different from the traditional British recipe, but as loyal - if new - members of the EEC, our picklers would be expected to comply!" Think of it, that was 1973 and I have a feeling that particular EEC committee has not finalised the recipe yet. Now it is all very well to play about with something that has been and will be around for a long time; but what of today's technology - here today and gone tomorrow, or at most, the day after tomorrow? The EEC can't stop inventors. Even to devise standard EEC signs for a fundamental, such as toilet identification, is fraught. Already at least 50% of the female sex now wear trousers of one kind or another. So there may come a time when the standard EEC be-skirted sign will convey no message to those in need.

Changing direction somewhat, at this time we are faced with the threat of the Europlug: of course it would be nice to have the same plugs and sockets all over Europe but is this practical? After that change-over is completed goodness knows when and at goodness knows what cost, is it at all certain we shall still need to distribute power in that way? What I am certain of is that had there been in the 1930s a Euro-stage-lighting-control specification I would never have been allowed to unveil an organ-console for that purpose back in 1935! 

STRAND

book review

ADVICE ON ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND PORTABLE APPLIANCE TESTING IN THEATRES

Published by Association of British Theatre Technicians, paperback, 55pp

Sponsored by Strand Lighting Ltd

Since the Electricity at Work Regulations came into force in 1989, confusion and controversy have reigned in the theatre industry, particularly on the subject of portable appliance testing.

For 5 years, many questions have gone unanswered: Who is responsible? What equipment must I test? When? How often? Do I need to keep records? Should I also be taking other safety precautions?

Answers to all these questions,

and many more, form part of this new booklet from the Association of British Theatre Technicians. The booklet starts by explaining the background to electrical safety testing, and the responsibilities of management and staff. It then gives guidance in the setting up of a testing schedule, with a very thorough set of notes about which tests to apply to which appliances, how often, and what results might be expected, together with suggestions for other appropriate safety measures. An excellent explanation of the requirement for Earthing as a safety measure completes the booklet.



Advice on Electrical Safety and Portable Appliance Testing in Theatres is available from the Association of British Theatre Technicians price £10 (including postage and packing). 