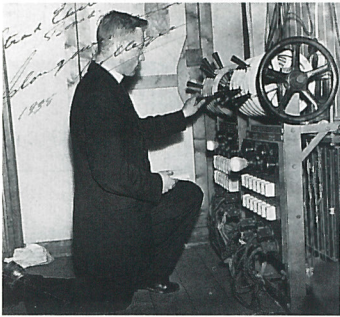


1914 - 1994

STRAND AT 80

Eighty years ago, with the registration of its first lantern housing design, the Strand Electric Company began. Thanks to Fred Benthams involvement in the company from 1932 to 1974 with his prodigious writing skill, and the talents of his contemporaries, the diverse history of the company is extremely well documented.



Strand Library

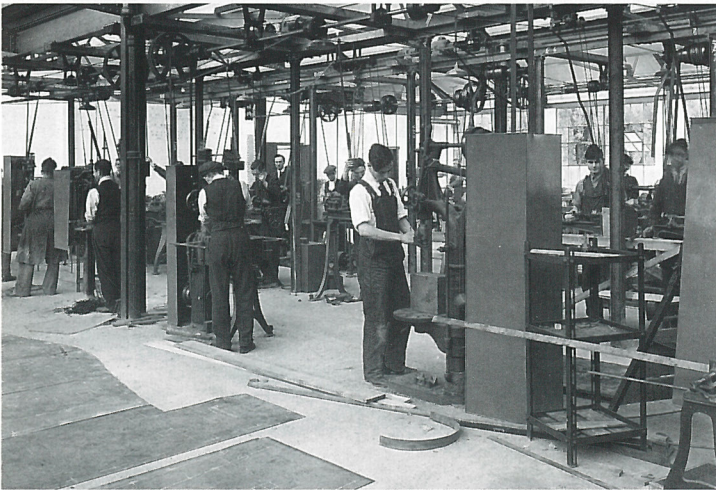
"Let us pray it works..."

But what has today's multi-million pound, multi-national Strand Lighting, a company within the Film and Television Division of The Rank Organisation Plc, got in common with Arthur Earnshaw and Phillip Sheridan's fledgling Strand Electric of 1914? The answer is its staff's commitment to lighting for entertainment. The fact that the

company has survived so long is due to its ability to respond to the prevailing industry requirements and conditions. Knowing when to go it alone, and when to work with agents and dealers. Knowing when to broaden the range of services offered, and when to re-focus on core business. Knowing which new technology to develop for the industry, and when to let others learn some pioneering lessons first.

Undoubtedly the biggest benefit of being an old-established company is learning through experience, and having the means to evaluate new ideas with the help of hindsight. But this does not mean that Strand is standing still, wallowing in past glories. As can be seen from the latest catalogue, Strand is leading the world with disk-software based consoles, high performance digital dimming, and system wide control. Strand is at the forefront of the latest thinking in theatrical and TV lighting. And there is much more on the way.

To celebrate Strand's 80th birthday, *Lighting and Sound International* printed a special 16-page feature and to complement this publication, we've decided to take a sideways look at the past 80 years with a personal reminiscence, and a few dusty photographs from the archives.



Strand Library

Manufacturing at Power Road, Chiswick - 1932.



Strand Library

Strand products take to the road...



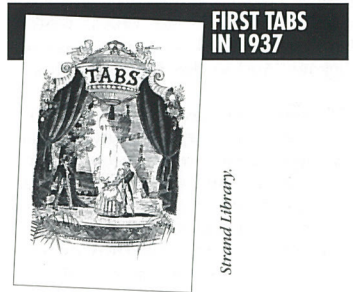
Strand Library

...and the air!

LOOKING BACK THROUGH TABS

Viewed from a distance of some fifty years, surrounded by the latest desktop publishing computerised gadgets, photograph-bending software, electronic text transmission and E-mailed articles, we were full of admiration when we saw for the first time the father of the modern day *Lights!* - the first pioneering issue of *TABS*.

Even from the outset, the 12-page A5 booklet was undoubtedly *TABS*. The evocative pen drawing on the cover, showing a theatrical melodrama with spotlit actors, remained in place until 1963 and became an internationally-known logo for Strand.



The original *TABS* cover illustration.

The first edition of *TABS* boldly proclaims, "Issued by the Strand Electric Company in the interests of the amateur theatre." This set the course for the editorial style; conversational, informative, respectful that amateurs may not have the technical or practical knowledge of the professionals, but were, in the pages of *TABS* at least, more important than the professionals.

The change in cover design in 1963, and the omission of the reference to amateur theatre, resulted from a conversation in the back of a London taxi between the celebrated set designer Sean Kenny and Fred Benthams. When Kenny remarked that he was a fan of *TABS* but that he couldn't differentiate between one edition and the other because the covers were always the same, the captive taxi audience, who just happened to be the editor of *TABS*, took immediate action. Amateur it was no longer; and photographs replaced the drawing.

Back in October 1937, the first edition was undoubtedly a 'toe in the water', there wasn't even an issue number or date. But the sentiments of the company haven't changed much in the intervening fifty years, as the first editorial shows;

'From the professional stage we obtain information about the uses of most of our lanterns and effects, which enables us to amend or improve their design and to cater for the particular requirements of this branch of lighting, but many of our lanterns are primarily designed for small stages which have their own problems. It is of these problems that we hear so little and of which we want to hear more.'

In addition to advertising the hire facilities of Strand Electric (a 500W baby spot would cost you 6s 6d [33p] a week and a 12 watt dimmer board 42s [£2.10] a week to hire), the magazine described the new northern branch in Oldham Road, Manchester, and introduced a new lantern - the Pattern 73 1000W mirror spot.

The astonishing fact in those immediate pre-War years was that *TABS* was so frequent; October and November 1937, five editions the following year, and the final edition in April 1939 (until 1946) by which time it had grown to a 24 page magazine. Its popularity grew owing to its unique appeal, and the quality of the advice given to its readers. Early editions of *TABS* make frequent reference to the healthy relationship created between the company, its magazine and its readers, and it is encouraging to hear so many similar sentiments from the readers of *Lights!* fifty seven years on.

We hope to be developing *Lights!* further in the future, and always welcome our reader's comments and input from wherever you are in the world, or from those, as we said back in 1937, that we hear so little and of which we want to hear more.

TABS EDITIONS

We are regularly asked by researchers, authors and students about articles in *TABS*, the original Strand Electric journal which was eventually superseded, after an absence of four years, by *Lights!*

Alas, Strand's own collection does not include the pre-War editions, starting in October 1937, but the archive is now complete from Volume 4 (September 1946) thanks to the help of several readers who answered a previous plea for older editions. We are always very happy to supply historical material from our *TABS* archive for students and authors, so if anyone is able to donate copies of *TABS* volumes 1 to 3 to us, they will be helping a whole new generation of students who regularly refer to Strand for help.

During a recent foray into the archives, we produced a list of every edition of *TABS*, and for the collectors amongst you, the list is printed in Fact Sheet 14.

Also, we have been contacted by Phil Windsor who has been tackling the unenviable task of creating the complete *TABS* index. Mr. Windsor has kindly donated a copy of the index which we have added to our Fact Sheet 14. David Wilmore has sent a photocopy of the first edition for our archive (see item on this page). If you would like a copy of Phil Windsor's *TABS* index, or a photocopy of the first edition of *TABS*, please write to The Marketing Department, Strand Lighting, Syon Lane, Isleworth TW7 5QD, or mark and return the enclosed reader reply card.

