

## Correspondence

### *More Stalling*

Dear Sir,

I cannot agree with your editorial proposition that the development of sophisticated memory systems makes a stalls control desk less necessary. There are two possible facilities in a stalls desk:

(1) Channel controls which permit the composition of pictures (i.e. *Cue states*) from the stalls as well as from the main control room.

(2) Master control which permits the ebb and flow of these pictorial states into a fluid lighting *plot*.

In any situation, the use of a stalls *channel* control to devise the cue states saves a lot of production time and a lot of operator drudgery. On the other hand, stalls *master* controls are only required when the lighting designer is also the switchboard operator: but this is a situation which is becoming increasingly common with the growth of the civic repertoire theatre.

Surely the ideal way to provide a stalls control facility is to follow the early examples quoted in your editorial and make the entire desk transportable to the stalls: after all, transistors weigh less than relays and although more information must now pass down the interconnecting cables, modern electronics does not require the one-wire-per-contact of the old servos.

Your editorial also tends to suggest that Instant Plotting is the important feature of these new controls: the splendid Gil Binks of Manchester Palace has been offering instant plotting on his primitive Light Console for years but he still has long waits while the production team hold between-cue conferences and the SM gets his prompt copy cued. The real importance and pleasures of DDM are not the hundreds of accurately memorised pictures but the way in which the advanced electronics enables the interplay of these states to be accurately controlled on cue. Having worked most forms of switchboard, ancient and modern, it is only with my fingers on DDM that I have felt really in command of a cross-fading sequence.

When you say that working a board must be

fun, I hope that you primarily mean fun for the *audience*: as professional theatre technicians, we light shows for the audience, not for our own personal enjoyment. Nevertheless most switchboards are fun for the operator, provided you can see the stage and have confidence in the machine's reliability (deficiencies can be overcome so long as they are consistent deficiencies). No, the excitement of working DDM is not that it is fun, but that it is the first ever switchboard to behave *logically*.

Yours,

FRANCIS REID  
*Switchboard Operator,  
Theatre Royal, Norwich*

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### *DDM—A Revolution, etc.*

Dear Sir,

To regulate the light needed by actors on stage you are now saying "We must buy a computer", meaning "You must buy one".

What is wrong with hiring one or two extra pairs of hands for the trickier show? It probably won't run many nights, anyway. A designer who asks for 360 ways before he can get to work should be given a few whiffs of Supplementary Benefit to shrink his ideas down to what is artistically adequate from what is financially possible.

It makes not a jot of difference to the performers or the audience whether the show is lighted by a multi-lantern, multi-way set up or by a modest spot barrel and F.O.H.'s. When the former is used only the designer or the operator would notice if two pages of script were turned over at once.

You are suffering from what my distinguished namesake has called "the technological imperative". Others call it "growth mania".

You may, of course, have television production in mind. In that case you cannot expect to go on being accepted in decent society.

Yours, from TABS No. 1,  
ERIC MUMFORD  
*Maesgolau, Newport, Pem.*

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## Synopses

### 1066 and all that

L'éditeur réfléchit à la grande habileté numérique requise désormais de l'expert de l'éclairage, non pas à cause de la sophistication du matériel, mais du code de sept chiffres à utiliser lors des commandes.

Der Redakteur bemerkt, dass von dem modernen Bühnenbildner grosse Geschicklichkeit mit Zahlen verlangt wird und zwar nicht wegen der Hochentwicklung der Geräte, sondern weil er diese mittels siebenzifferigen Kennnummern bestellen muss.

### Festival Theatre, Stratford, Ontario

Par une curieuse coïncidence, les Stratford théâtres, d'un côté de l'Atlantique comme de l'autre, subissent simultanément des transformations structurales et installent un jeu d'orgue moderne. Bruce Buck décrit les développements au Canada qui, contrairement à ceux de sa soeur anglaise, comportent un système de "patching" typiquement américain.

Es ist eigenartig, dass die Gebäude der Theater in Stratford auf beiden Seiten des Atlantischen Ozeans gleichzeitig geändert werden und Stellwerke mit neuen Speichersystemen erhalten. Bruce Buck beschreibt die Installation die im Gegensatz zu England ein typisch amerikanisches "Patching System" enthält.