

The Newsletter
of the Association of
Motion Picture Sound

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A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME

70 YEARS OF
TALKING
PICTURES



AMPS

OCTOBER 6th 1927



At last, "PICTURES that TALK
like LIVING PEOPLE!"

Vitaphone Talking Pictures
are electrifying audiences the
country over!

For *Vitaphone* brings to you
the greatest of the world's
great entertainers . . .

Screen stars! Stage stars!
Opera stars! Famous orches-
tras! Master musicians!

Vitaphone recreates them ALL
before your eyes. You see and
hear them act, talk, sing and
play—like human beings in the
flesh!

Do not confuse *Vitaphone* with
mere "sound effects."

Vitaphone is the ONE proved
successful talking picture—ex-
clusive product of Warner
Bros.

Remember this—if it's not
Warner Bros. *Vitaphone*, it's
NOT the real, life-like talking
picture.

Vitaphone climaxes all previ-
ous entertainment achieve-
ments. See and hear this mar-
vel of the age—*Vitaphone*.



This Newsletter is edited by Bob Allen and Keith Spencer-Allen and is published by the Association of Motion Picture Sound for distribution to all members. AMPS can be contacted through Brian Hickin, The Admin Secretary, 28 Knox Street, London W1H 1FS. Membership enquiries to Peter Hodges, AMPS Membership Secretary, c/o 28 Knox Street, London W1H 1FS. Any communications with the AMPS Newsletter should be addressed to The Editor, AMPS Newsletter, Old Post Office Cottage, Old Post Office Road, Chevington, Suffolk IP29 5RD.

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AMPS

TREVOR PYKE - CYRIL COLLICK

Members who knew Trevor and Cyril will all be saddened by the news of their deaths.

I first met Trevor in 1954 when we worked together for AB Pathe's sound department situated in a Berwick Street basement just off Oxford Street. Trevor was a sound camera operator and I was assistant maintenance. My main memory of Trevor in those days was his infectious laugh, which was not unlike the uncontrollable laughter trade mark of comedian Norman Wisdom.

After I left Pathe, our paths didn't often cross, as he built up his prestigious dubbing career and I plodded along as a freelance production mixer.

We met up again in the early days of AMPS when we were both elected to the very first Council. During those early days of AMPS Trevor contributed a great deal of time and many good ideas to the Association. Amongst other things he was responsible for organising the logo.

The name of Cyril Collick was highly respected throughout the industry. There are countless producers, directors and editors whose soundtracks benefited from the skill, care and love of his work that Cyril gave to their productions.

For many years, Cyril held the lowest ACT membership number in the sound section. Now sadly that honour has passed on to another.

They will both be missed.

BOB ALLEN

~

I was very sorry to hear that my wartime colleague Cyril Collick had died in September. Although he had a career in films it was during World War II that I knew him

We served together in the RAF Film Unit in North Africa, Italy and Burma. His sense of humour and cheerfulness during some very difficult situations was reassuring. I did not work with him after the war but we kept in touch.

When we retired we hoped to meet and exchange wartime reminiscences, but it was not to be. I have lots of happy memories of my association with Cyril and I send my sincere condolences to his wife and family.

LARRY THOMPSON
Cheltenham

MAKING SOUND SENSE OF AMPS

- one member's opinion

Can I present one member's perspective of AMPS? Maybe it will encourage further discussion in the Association.

I joined AMPS near it's conception when there was no alternative organisation to meet the needs of sound technicians. I had pressed hard to try and organise sound technicians to form something like the Camera Guild. I had always envied them and had envisaged that AMPS would evolve into something on the same line. I am out of touch with the Camera Guild but I recall years ago how successfully the Guild was run. This was a body who production companies listened to. Crewing and rates ① were openly discussed and there was a healthy exchange of ideas. Yet this was not a union orientated organisation. Sound Technicians had no representation until AMPS was formed in 1989.

Eight years on and here we have an Association still run on a shoe string ② with none but the more mature sound technicians ever appearing at a meeting. In fact it always appears to be the same faces. My vision of a sound association was a periodic gathering of feature and TV film technicians debating innovations and an interchange of ideas and open discussion on sound problems on location. Introduction of new equipment and techniques from a wide source. Although I am pleased and thankful that such companies as Kudelski and Audio Developments, exhibit their products at our annual meetings ③ I ponder for how much longer will their interest remain unless younger technicians turn up at our AGM. These are the people who the exhibitors wish to meet and sell their products to. We need far more input from top technicians who would be prepared to floor seminars to members in their own grade. Without interfering with our union BECTU we could have open discussions on working conditions and problems facing sound crews.

For example, we have seen the size of sound crews reduce, often two on heavy shoots. TV commercials crewing down to the recordist only. The more AMPS members are aware of what is going on through debating, the better. Yes, AMPS should not be political or union orientated but at the same time we could make it clear to producers that sound is not a means to an end.

In my forty years as a sound technician I have always found a certain apathy among sound technicians. Any one who has attended a sound section meeting will know what I am talking about. So I am not that surprised that AMPS has not in my opinion matured. ④ I applaud the people who have strived to keep AMPS going. The question in my mind is, going where? Maybe

this letter will prompt you to put forward a few suggestions to the executives. The only stimulation I ever get from an AMPS AGM is the pre- and post meeting chats with old friends. If only some of the conversations could be part of an open forum. For example I was handed a leaflet which mentioned the techniques used in silent wireless playback on *Evita* where live sound was recorded over playback. This would be of great interest to many sound mixers if such a subject was printed in our Newsletter. With due respect, I personally do not want to read historic articles and facts I have absolutely no interest in at all. ⑤

I would like to know what's going on now in the industry and far more input about sound recording and post production. Reports of the many new microphones which are becoming available. Digital and hard disk recording updates. To me this is what AMPS should be about.

Maybe you would agree it would be interesting to know who the sound crews are on various film productions. Such information could find a section in the Newsletter and would be of great interest to members. Apart from crossing paths at interviews or the occasional meeting, technicians in the same grade may never meet. Would it not be of great interest for let's say a sound mixer who has completed a picture to write an article recounting his or her experience. Trading such information would be of enormous interest. AMPS could organise meetings say for boom operators, editors to discuss their own particular grade. I recall writing an article in the BECTU journal several years ago on my experience recording sound in the Caribbean. I had a tremendous response from less experienced sound recordists asking for help and advice as they were going to similar climates to film. Subjects such as radio mic frequencies problems around the world would be invaluable. I had hoped that AMPS could have run a message service for sound members such as GAS which has been run successfully for many years. I assume it still is. There will always be a problem for main stream technicians to attend meetings as they will be working. I cannot stress enough that this is where the internet comes into the equation. A show of hands at the AGM showed that even many of the more mature members are on the net. What about sound forums and an active web page for the interactive change of views and ideas worldwide. ⑥ It could be used for supplying and selling used equipment, crewing and post production, notice of stolen equipment. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Imagine the work worldwide which could be generated for AMPS members who could produce a web CV.

AMPS regretfully needs a new generation of younger members to carry the Association into the millennium. With the present set-up, I personally,

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cannot envisage such an influx into the Association. At the concept there was a great divide between film and TV recording. This has changed dramatically as has the recording equipment we use. Maybe this is holding back the younger set who only work on video, from becoming members. For the Association to survive, in my humble opinion, it will need far more funding ⑦. You cannot run an association with any prestige that has to worry about the cost of postage. The question is how to achieve this?

I rarely get the motivation these days to air my views on a particular subject. I hope by writing this letter it will remove the blinkers and encourage members to either agree or criticise my opinions. I will remain an AMPS member as long as I can afford the subscription. For retiring members AMPS is probably their last bastion within the film industry. And I'm sure many younger members could learn a great deal from them and hear some pretty interesting experiences.

DAVID WYNNE JONES

COMMENT ON DAVID JONES' LETTER

Thank you for your letter David. I do hope that members reading it will accept your challenge to 'agree or criticise' your opinions. If they agree with you then I hope they will come forward with constructive ideas *and* the necessary help to aid the Council putting them into practice.

For the record I have taken you up on a few points (circle points in the text of your letter).

① Rates of pay and the contractual conditions of employment are the prerogative and duty of trade unions. AMPS members dissatisfied with these particular aspects should, as members of BECTU, support their endeavours.

② The reasons for AMPS 'running on a shoestring' is to keep membership fees low, so that members will not begrudge paying to belong. Before the recent policy of accepting Sustaining Members membership fees were AMPS' only income. The inclusion of Sustaining Members is going well and has given us the ability to pay for the new BFC Internet Website, to increase the size and circulation of the Newsletter, and to make a reasonable job of publishing the *On Set Noise Report* and *Membership Directory*.

③ The AGM this year was the first where an open invitation was issued to Sustaining Members to attend, to meet members and exhibit their products. It's intended that this invitation will continue and that even more of the Sustaining Members will be able to be represented.

The reaction of the eight Sustaining Members who were present this year was excellent and all agreed that it was well worthwhile attending. None made comments about the age of the

members at the AGM. Anyhow it's possibly the older members who have money to spend on new equipment.

④ AMPS 'has not matured'! I'm glad it hasn't as decay or death usually follows maturity quite quickly. And I'm not being complacent in believing that AMPS is well, alive and making good progress. The Council members work hard. Many good technical meetings have been arranged, occasionally we've had over fifty attending although some have been less supported. I hope that your suggestions will prompt members to put forward their ideas, heaven knows they have been asked often enough to contribute.

On your point of it only being 'the more mature' sound technicians who ever appear at AMPS meetings, this doesn't tally with my experience. Recent meetings at CTS, Twickenham and Anvil drew from the full age range of AMPS membership.

⑤ By now, if you read the Newsletter you will have enjoyed the article on Evita Playback in Issue 21. Maybe you don't want to read about the history of motion picture sound but there are others who do find it interesting. Most members are quite warm in their appreciation of the general interest aspect of the Newsletter. If only more members would send in their experiences and problems for discussion, as you suggest.

⑥ I note that you are on the internet. Have you ever visited the AMPS website? It's been up and running for almost a year now, thanks to hard work by Sandy MacRae and his boys. The site has been visited from all points of the compass and resulted in several new members joining.

⑦ Suggestions of how we raise more funding would be welcome. Yes, we do worry about the postage - not because we can't afford it but because we don't want to be wasteful of member's subscriptions. Postal contact is the main method of communication with the membership. If we didn't watch closely we could be overmailing.

Incidentally the Council has many times refused offers of mailouts by manufacturers, concerned that AMPS membership lists may fall into the hands of junk mailers. That too is the reason why addresses are not included in the Membership Directory.

THE EDITOR & CHAIRMAN

100 YEARS AGO - 1897

The first advertising films were produced: Birds Custard for Arthur Cooper of St Albans, Herts, and in the USA for Haig Whisky, Milwaukee Beer and Mallard's Chocolate. These US commercials were shown in the open air and back projected on to a screen on Broadway at 34th Street. The projectionist was Edwin S Porter who later directed The Great Train Robbery, the first narrative movie and the first western.

PLAYBACK FROM WAYBACK

The Newsletter article about the demands made on Ken Weston and his associates during the production of *Evita* left me totally bewildered and rather than trying to understand the complications of what had to be done I simply gave up and took refuge in the garden, full of admiration for Ken Weston and thankful to be stuck firmly in a steam age, analogue groove where problems were not so alarmingly complex.

Thinking back I remembered two particular playback incidents which were abnormal. On location in Morecambe for *The Entertainer* in 1959, Tony Richardson

decided in his usual unconventional way that the music for the Music Hall sequences, which had been prerecorded in London for playback use only, not only didn't have the acoustic quality of a music hall but the performance by highly trained musicians was too

polished in comparison with the local musicians who performed at the Alhambra Music Hall, Morecambe, where we were shooting. The musical director who was with us on location agreed and Tony told me that we would scrap the London-made playback tapes and record new playback tapes with the Alhambra Theatre orchestra. That we managed to do and those new music masters were sent to Shepperton where playback copies were made. All went well during the shooting of the music hall sequences, which involved the orchestra and tap dancing, and having been assured by Tony that there was no more music we were most relieved. Later he decided to shoot an extra scene which involved a short additional piece of music, no great problem because it involved one shot for which the music recorded at the time would become the master, so no need for playback and that track went off with the day's rushes. The next morning Tony told me he had decided to do an extra cover shot which involved a section of that music, I told him that it could not be done since, for obvious reasons we would need playback and the music master was at Shepperton. As the shot had to be done that morning Norman Bolland, the maintenance man

and I decided that the only thing to do was to record a new playback track 'over the phone' from Shepperton. Norman went off to phone John Cox to warn him what we proposed, John, having first said "What ever is that mad mixer (me) going to think up next" organised the playback of the music rushes on the transfer room speaker with a telephone in front of it and we made a new telephone quality playback tape which, in spite of interruption from the 3 minute 3 pips added by the GPO, served it's purpose quite satisfactorily.

A more complex and unfriendly playback session took place in 1980 on the *Heaven's Gate* locations in Oxford. By then I had been recording on twin track for some time, using a battery operated stereo

mixer, custom built by Raindirk, and a Nagra IVS. Over a working breakfast at Claridges Hotel, after he finished his dawn jogging, Michael Cimino told me that what little experience he had of twin track, used occasionally on his previous picture *The Deer Hunter*, had not impressed him: understandably when he described some of the results, however, he now thought that it might have some uses, which he would



Disc playback equipment on Shepperton sound stage circa 1956
L/R Chas Wheeler, Bill Cook, Peter Handford, Norman Daines

consider before our next meeting. At that meeting he announced that since he considered that conventional methods of using playback were old fashioned and had an unreal result he had decided to instruct me to use an entirely different method for his picture. He had ordered the highest of hi-fi equipment, with Altec speakers of enormous output, to be delivered from the States at enormous expense. High quality tapes of the music masters would be sent from the States and instead of using these in the conventional way, I was to record these with fixed mics in front of the speakers using a separate stereo Nagra. That track would then become the new music master. I did point out that a stereo Nagra would only record two tracks and the music master would have to be mixed down from multitrack to two track which might not seem a good idea to the unfortunate rerecording mixers who had to handle the dubbing but Mr Cimino was not interested in any problems, even more serious ones that I tried to explain later.

The hi-fi equipment duly arrived and was set up with the speakers some distance from the extensive grounds of a college which formed the set. The music sounded wonderful, all over Oxford, and when the 60Hz tape had been replaced by a 50Hz

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pulsed copy one problem was solved, but there were others which Mr Cimino found irritating and eventually refused to consider or discuss.

The size of the set was enormous, the action which was to be covered by 5 separate cameras and crews, took place over a large area, all a considerable distance from the speakers with their fixed mics; and because the recorded output from those speakers was to become the new music master the playback would have to be kept going at a constant, loud level throughout the sequence. Inevitably all the actors at varying distances from the fixed mics, in front of the speakers, would have to be fitted with radio mics which would be mixed down to a separate Nagra IVS. However well the dialogue was picked up by the radio mics, it was certain that, sometimes at least, the extremely loud playback music would also be picked up on the actors' radio mics and because of the distance from the the speakers the music picked up on the radio mics would be - and was - out of synch with the music from the mics in front of the speakers. I pointed out to Mr Cimino that sound in air travels at a finite speed which was fixed by the Almighty and could not be altered, even by a film director or United Artists. He told me I was being obstinately obstructive, refused to discuss it and before long would not speak to or listen to me at all except through a third party, which was quite a relief.

Some years later, when working at Todd AO in Hollywood, I met one of the mixers who had been involved in the dubbing of *Heaven's Gate*, he told me that his experiences with Cimino had been infinitely worse and more prolonged than mine.

Thinking much further back to pre tape times when sound crews consisted of four or five people as a matter of course, playback was from 12 inch acetate discs cut to order in the studio sound department. Studio shooting could sometimes become quite boring, especially when a lot of guide track playback was involved and at the more enlightened and less regimented studios, such as Isleworth and Shepperton, the acetate discs made an important contribution to practical jokes which helped to relieve the boredom. For instance, the swarf produced from disc cutting could be made up into tightly packed little 'bombs' which when set to smoulder were lobbed into a sound truck, or office, where they filled the air with dense and smelly smoke - the wonder is that such activities never caused a serious, or even a minor fire.

Another trick, amusing to everyone except the the unfortunate playback operator, was to cut a disc from some totally irrelevant number, label it with the title of a production number and change the discs over on the turntable during the lunch break. In one such instance when playback was called after lunch Laurence Olivier was surprised to hear *There's a Pawn Shop On The Corner* instead of one of his solo songs from *The Beggar's Opera*... an unfortunate picture which was rechristened *The Bugger's Uproar* on the clapper board for several days until it was noticed by the 'management'.

On another occasion on the same picture a rather inexperienced and very naive young assistant, called in to deal with playback from disc, was told that, on location, he would have to operate the equipment mounted on horse back! The unfortunate lad spent several days trying to decide how he could possibly solve a problem which seems even more difficult than some of those so successfully dealt with by the *Evita* crew.

PETER HANDFORD

INDUSTRY NEWS

□ Akai has announced a major software update for the DD8 digital dubber. V1.50 allows the DD8 to directly playback Sound Designer II takes from an Apple Macintosh formatted ProTools disk. The process requires an OMF composition to be created containing only the edit information from the ProTools session. The DD8 directly relates this to the audio takes in their ProTools native file format and the OMF composition can be played back instantly. Apparently following a couple of simple key strokes you can edit the OMF composition and compile it to an Akai disk if required. It also supports full OMF import from Avid systems. Direct File exchange with other manufacturers is planned and DD1500 users will be receiving the same capability on the next release of DD1500 software due soon.

□ Marantz has announced that the prices of its CDR recorders have been reduced by significant amounts. The CDR615 has been reduced by £555 to £1395 and the CDR620 by £955 to £1995. Marantz claim that these reductions follow improvements in productivity and economies of scale. They do however bring the Marantz product pricing closer to HHB's own-brand CDR recorder first shown at the AES in March. Whatever the reason, creating and archiving SFX on CD has just become a lot cheaper.

□ Chris Coppel has joined the European operation of DTS in the newly created role of Director of Film Services. He will be responsible for liaison with DTS film customers in the UK and Europe. He has a wealth of background in the film, video and broadcast production markets on both sides of the Atlantic with Warner Bros, MCA Universal and Vidfilm. He comes from a cinematic family - his father Alec Coppel wrote *Vertigo*, later filmed by Hitchcock, and rather spookily, has just been rereleased as a restored print with DTS sound. DTS also announced that as of June they exceeded 10,000 theatre installations of DTS equipment. Universal, MGM and Warner Bros will be issuing all their major films with DTS this year.

ZAXCOM DEVA RECORDER

Twickenham Studios, Sunday 21st September saw an audience of over 50 for a presentation by Glen Sanders of Zaxcom, of his company's portable 4-channel digital audio hard disk recorder. Because this was considered an important event, an invitation was extended to the IBS and BKSTS membership to attend, and it was good to see some IBS members who contributed important points to the discussions.

The meeting kicked off with Roger Clemo of UK representatives Harris introducing the team who will be supporting the Deva. He also added a few words about their company - that it is part of the Studio Products Division of the Harris Corporation whose group turnover last year was \$3.8 billion. They are based in Cambridge.

Glen Sanders of Zaxcom then took over and made a thorough and illuminating demonstration of the Deva's features, capabilities - now, and in the near and far futures.

He kicked off by plugging his microphone into the Deva's mic amp and announcing that he was going to do the entire presentation through this unit so that if it made any unpleasant noise over the next two hours, we'd all hear it. He turned the mic gain up till feedback so that we could all 'hear' the low noise.

Zaxcom was formed in 1986 and has specialised in digital audio and video products. Products such as the DMX1000 mixer are in use worldwide including the UK. The company is just 14 people and it was suggested that because of this efficiency they were able to keep a very competitive price structure on their products.

Many of the audience were familiar with the concept of the machine from article in the newsletter, so it was the additional points made that were most interesting. Firstly the removable hard disk is airtight, shock and dust resistant. He estimated a current cost of the disk to be around \$500 although this would probably come down to \$400. Their experience had shown that a big movie would require around 10 disks but following user feedback had decided to offer alternative possibilities. In a static situation it will be possible to record onto the internal HD and an external Jaz drive at the same time. In mobile situations, the recording would be made on the HD and copied to the Jaz. This should increase the convenience of the system - writing to the Jaz in their own MARF format (specifically tailored Mobile Audio Recording Format), WAV format and the new Sony dubbing format, specifically for use with the new 20-bit Sony digital dubber.

Many were impressed by the demo of the Deva's 10 second prerecord - it's always storing audio in a buffer when turned on. Glen pressed Record, and then Stop, and immediately played back the ten seconds of his talk prior to having pressed Record!

He went on to demonstrate the resistance to shock and vibration. The HD is rated at 125g in play and 200g when stationary and so is not likely to be damaged itself but the writing or replay may

be affected by vibration - it uses a 20 seconds buffer memory to store audio in until the vibration stops, and then writes it to disk. To show this he violently shook the machine in replay, and there were no detectable errors audible. He also played back some material he had recorded in Trafalgar Square the previous day with the unit just slung over his shoulder.

Not demonstrated but the unit has the ability to print out a take list if attached to a printer. The ease with which you can access takes was impressive. It is also impossible to record over material without executing a specific key sequence. So if you are in the middle of playing back a take and there is the need to record immediately, just hitting the Record button enters that mode, clear of any existing material. It is possible to set up up to 100 cue points for playback.

Not all facilities are currently implemented - insert record and compression/limiting was due within the next few weeks.

Battery life was touched on and it was mentioned that Nickel Hydride batteries had been found to extend life by half an hour, up to nearly 3 hours. The unit still keeps timecode values with the power off.

Provision for a 24-bit future was discussed. The unit runs at 20-bit now (disk 24-bit ready) but the converters, mic amps are designed to be upgradable at a later date should 24-bit or even 96kHz sampling become a reality. Also larger HD drives are possible in the future upping record time to 4 hours.

The PCMCIA socket adds further possibilities beyond the Jaz drive connection, such as working directly with workstations and modems. Fairlight have already incorporated the MARF format in the MFX system and Zaxcom are in talks with others.

Questions came thick and fast:

- *How robust was the disk?* Glen took the HD out of the Deva, explained that they had added their own protection on top of the basic, banged it forcefully on the table and put it back in the Deva. He said that he didn't know what more could be done.

- *How long to change the disk?* About 10 secs

- *Able to record new EBU standardised broadcast WAV format?* Not yet but will investigate what it is and if wanted will implement it. There are no limits on number of formats that can be added.

- *How much?* About \$10.5k in the US and approx £7.5k in the UK, in the form demonstrated.

- *Can the disk be turned off to save power?* No not as yet - but this may be added in future.

- *What about cost of disks versus DAT tape?* Disks will cost more - they're doing Jaz drive interface first but also has a SCSI interface and so could plug in MO, CDR, DAT data tape etc. Will be able to record on other media, enabling you to get the media cost down to the budget.

- *Is it radio mic proof?* Yes, it's EU approved.

Questions and closer examination continued until the meeting closed at 1.15, with the demo machines shown departing with some of the audience who had managed to borrow them for closer examination.

Thanks to Zaxcom and Twickenham Studios for a most interesting meeting.

KSA

(Recordings of the meeting for members unable to attend are available from Bob Allen)

WHY THE JAZZ SINGER?

...and puts forward a personal theory

October 6th 1927 was the 70th anniversary of the premiere of Warner Bros' production, *The Jazz Singer*.

Ask movie trivia experts what was the first talking picture and you can be fairly sure they will say *The Jazz Singer*. Why?

From the first appearance of the Kinetoscope in 1894, showmen and inventors endeavoured to provide sound for moving pictures. In the 33 years between the Kinetoscope and *The Jazz Singer*, literally hundreds of patents for making pictures talk were filed throughout the world.

Many ingenious ideas, for mechanically and electrically interlocking phonographs with film cameras and projectors were developed. A lot achieved their aim and many exhibitions of talking pictures were given. However they were all limited by the lack of suitable amplification and the movies stayed silent apart from live musical accompaniment and sometimes occasional spot sound effects.

Audiences were quite happy with the then, silent movie state of the art. Visual story telling in the late teens and the twenties had developed to a very high standard; even today, the classics of the period are very watchable.

So what caused the great public reaction to the *The Jazz Singer*, giving it the privilege to be regarded as the first talking picture? It was made as a silent film but intended to have a recorded musical score and several synch songs sung by Al Jolson. It was never intended to be a talking picture. Harry and Jack Warner were most definitely anti talking pictures, as were all Hollywood producers at the time.

The picture was a sellout, one of the big box office hits of all time. The public flocked to see it. Why? It wasn't a great story. If it had been shown with only a musical score it would have been quite ordinary.

The song numbers can't have been all that much of a novelty. The public had seen musical and comedy short sound films before, like the earlier Vitaphone programmes shown with *Don Juan* and *The Better Ole*. Or they may have even earlier, in 1923, seen the Lee de Forest Phonofilms programme shown at the New York Rivoli.

A reason for earlier lack of interest could have been poor sound quality. The 1923 Phonofilm shorts were sound-on-film, which was still in it's infancy. W.E. Theisen, in an article in the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* written in 1934, says of Phonofilm "The quality of the reproduced sound was not of sufficient excellence



The Warner Theatre On Broadway

to interest the public greatly. The sound was so incomplete in harmonics, so limited in range of intensity and so unmistakably a 'canned' product that illusion was impossible."

So perhaps it was greatly improved sound quality that impressed the public. *The Jazz Singer* was Vitaphone sound-on-disc using Bell Telephone Labs then state of the art Orthophonic recording with reproduction through Western Electric high power amplifiers and newly designed loudspeakers.

Most commentators at the time, and now cinema historians, claim that it was Jolson's ad libs before and after song numbers, that caught the public's imagination but surely those short snippets, which weren't meant to be in the movie, didn't really give an impression of what talking pictures would be.

Maybe what the public liked was that the song numbers similar to those they had watched in supporting shorts were now integrated into a feature story film so making the music singing and talking all part of the experience.

My own theory is that it was 'natural' sound that intrigued the movie going public. The following is an extract from a BECTU History Project interview in which one time boom operator Fred Tomlin recalls seeing *The Jazz Singer* in a London cinema.

"Before I got into the (film) business I worked for J Lyons on their engineering staff. I was single at that time and earning good money. At every opportunity I used to go to the West End to the cinemas. When they fetched over *The Jazz Singer*, I thought, well I'm going to see that. It was on at the Rialto in Coventry Street. I was sitting there watching the film and they were in a cafe and suddenly you can hear all the sounds of the glasses and cups and all that. It was marvellous to hear all this, it really was, and then of course he (Jolson) had to sing a song. I thought 'cor bless my soul'. Well you couldn't keep me away from the West End cinemas because they had all the best films and then of course it was *The Singing Fool* and whatever came afterwards. I was always at the Cinema." (Note, Fred is now 89 and an Honorary member of AMPS)

When *In Old Arizona*, the first feature talking picture to be shot on location out of doors, was released, the big rave from critics and public was not for the production or story but for the naturalness of the outdoors, the wind and the crackling of bacon frying. One member of the audience said how he expected to hear people speak but it was the other sounds that surprised him - a train whistle, the bark of a dog, the hoof beats. But what especially amazed him was the off-screen footsteps of a man, heard before he could be seen.

Certainly, silent movies were a great art but watching them was like looking at life through a large sound-proof plate glass window, dependent upon mime, gestures and title cards to tell the story; the characters lived in a soundless world. Any musical accompaniment and the sometime spot effects supplied by a stage crew were : outside of the frame that surrounded that silent world.

The sounds of "the glasses and cups and all that" which so impressed Fred Tomlin removed that 'plate glass' and the audience was in the world with the characters they were watching. it was no longer a noiseless world. The noises people and things made lent reality to the action, and the talking was just another way of telling the story.

Whatever it was that the cinema going public found fascinating about *The Jazz Singer*, and whether or not it was the first talking picture, the way they turned out and queued to see it convinced the Hollywood producers that sound had arrived and the rush to get on the 'sound wagon' was on. Silent movies were finished.

Another **VITAPHONE**
Big Show

WILLIAM FOX
PRESENTS
AN EPICAL
ADVANCE
IN
TALKING PICTURES



"IN OLD ARIZONA"

THE FIRST TALKING PICTURE
SHOT ON LOCATION OUT OF DOORS
THE FIRST TALKING PICTURE
SHOT ON LOCATION OUT OF DOORS
THE FIRST TALKING PICTURE
SHOT ON LOCATION OUT OF DOORS

THE FIRST TALKING PICTURE
SHOT ON LOCATION OUT OF DOORS
THE FIRST TALKING PICTURE
SHOT ON LOCATION OUT OF DOORS

TRAP SHOW - SERIAL THURSDAY FEB 21 at 11 a.m.

POSTSCRIPT : Not all who saw the *The Jazz Singer* were favourably impressed. This is how the author Aldous Huxley felt about it.

"The film concludes with a scene in the theatre with Mammy mine in the stalls and the son warbling down at her the most penetratingly vulgar mammy song that it had ever been my lot to hear - my flesh crept as the loudspeaker poured out his sodden words, that greasy sagging melody. I felt ashamed of myself for listening to such things, for even being a member of the species to which such things are addressed".

And amongst film directors who were anti-talking pictures:

D.W. Griffiths: "We don't want and never shall the human voice in our movies".

Paul Rotha: "A film in which the speech and sound effects are perfectly synchronised and coincide with their visual image is absolutely contrary to the aims of cinema. It is a degenerate and misguided attempt to destroy the use of film."

...and Gilbert Seldes 1929 comment - "The tinkle of a glass, the shot of a revolver, a footfall on a hardware floor and the noise of a pack of playing cards being shuffled, all sound alike" doesn't quite tie up with Fred Tomlin's memory of early talkies.

BOB ALLEN

DOWN - UNDER



KIT ROLLINGS

While on a recent visit to New Zealand I looked up AMPS member Kit Rollings. Kit is listed in the AMPS Directory as a Sound Designer, and that he is in the true sense of the title.

He started work with the New Zealand National Film Unit in 1965 as a trainee in the sound department. In those days sound recordists in the National Film Unit were responsible for production sound, sound editing and rerecording of any job they were assigned to, an excellent training ground for a sound designer.

Kit has been freelance for sometime and now works from his splendid home situated in the hills surrounding Wellington harbour. He has his own small studio/editing suite for creating effects and sound editing. When the job calls for it he has both 1/4 inch and DAT portable equipment along with a range of quality microphones for location work. He now works fairly exclusively non-linear with his own Digidesign Pro Tools and Sound Designer II system.

One of my reasons for visiting Kit was to pass on Peter Handford's congratulations and high praise for the work he and his partners, David Sims and Hugh McDonald, had done producing the video *North Island Main Trunk Railway*.

Early in 1996 they had enquired of Peter if he had records of the 1/4 inch tape machine he had recommended to two New Zealand steam buffs who wanted to make recordings of NZ locos in action. It was tracks from recordings made in the early nineteen fifties by these two, Dawson Wilkinson and Peter Mellor, that Kit fitted to the early silent archive footage used in the video. The recorder incidentally was Vortexion powered on location by a vibrator and a 6 volt car battery, and a Swedish Pearl microphone.

EMI tape was used and the hundred or so 7" spools of 1/2 track recording are in excellent condition which is more than can be said of a lot of the tapes in Kit's vast library collection (1000 5" spools, 100 7" spools) of New Zealand sounds and atmospheres that he has recorded over the past 30 years. When I visited him he was in the middle of transferring 1/4" analogue tapes to DAT cassette. The operation was to salvage recordings that were recorded on 1/4" tape now suffering from 'sticky tape syndrome' which causes the tape to stick to the heads and

even stop the machine. In order to save the recordings the tapes in their boxes have to be baked in a fan oven for five hours at a constant temperature of 50 degrees Centigrade. They must then be transferred to other media within 48 hours otherwise the tapes will regress to the sticky state again.

Fortunately tape manufactured before the early 1980's doesn't seem to be affected by the problem; nevertheless Kit has some 350 5" spools and the 80 7" spools to treat and rerecord.

David Sims, Hugh McDonald and Kit have produced other documentary videos on the early days of steam in New Zealand. *Rails In The Wilderness* concerns the narrow gauge railways that hauled the giant timber logs from the rain forest to the sawmills. *The Rimutaka Incline* looks at the super locos designed by English engineer John Fell that were used for 77 years to get trains over the Rimutaka range hauling them 3 miles to the 1000ft summit. *On Demiston* is about a cable tramway opened in 1879 used to transport coal from a mine 1700ft above sea level down grades as steep as 1-in-1 to the coast for shipping. All are excellent productions with fascinating action archive pictures and interviews with people still living who worked on the railways of New Zealand.

The videos all running more than an hour can be recommended to all steam buffs and railway enthusiasts. They are available in the UK from Steam Powered Video, Dawes Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 9UU. Tel: 01227 752526 or Fax: 01227 752555.

Kit also works on New Zealand and Australian features and among his credits as sound designer are *Once Were Warriors: The Footstep Man*; *Broken English*; *Absent Without Leave*; and *All Men Are Liars*.

Since writing this, a letter from Kit tells me that the *North Island Main Trunk - New Zealand's Epic Railway Story* video was awarded 3rd place Certificate of Creative Excellence for Audio in the US International Film & Video Festival. Well done team.

BOB ALLEN

100 YEARS AGO - 1897

The first British film studio was built at the back of the Tivoli Theatre in The Strand, London, by the Mutoscope and Biograph company. It was glass sided, able to be rotated to follow the sun, and rocked for storm and sea sequences.

Sound Editor Les Hodgson pays...

A TRIBUTE TO MR ZEE

I worked on three pictures for Fred Zinneman and, like many others, count myself fortunate to have done so. The first of these was *A Man For All Seasons*, when Ralph Kemplen called me to help Harry Miller with the dialogues. This was just prior to mixing, and I was kept quite busy, but I was soon aware that FZ had very firm ideas of what he wanted, and also of the deference and respect with which he was regarded. I didn't exchange many words with him, being somewhat overawed, but he was always very courteous and friendly, and in any case working on such a film is reward enough.

Later I sound edited *Julia* and *Five Days One Summer*, two films that in different ways meant a lot to him personally. On *Julia* I learned a lot more about Mr Zee's ways of working, his likes and dislikes. On the floor, his quiet but tight control earned him the nickname 'the Iron Butterfly'. Nevertheless he allowed Walter Murch, the editor, all the time he needed to produce the first cut which took some five and a half weeks to materialise. It was a remarkable display of patience on Mr Zee's part, which was fully justified when the first screening was a great success. As the editing progressed and evening and weekend work became necessary, he heard about it and called me over to his office, where he asked if it would help to postpone the mix for a week. Of course I said yes, and five minutes later it was done. It all went very smoothly, even when he decided that he did not want the Twentieth Century Fox fanfare over their trademark, and called a percussion player complete with timpani to the music stage at Elstree where he devised a simple drum beat to take its place. The mix with Bill Rowe and Ray Merrin was very happy and relaxed, the resulting track excellent, and *Julia* a great success in all respects.

Five Days One Summer was in several aspects much more of a problem than *Julia*, not least with the music. During editing, Mr Zee brought in a disc of Schubert's F Minor Fantasia for Two Pianos, and we temp mixed it on three of four scenes, where it seemed to work exceptionally well, conveying perfectly the sadness of impossible love. However, abruptly, he said that he did not wish to continue this experiment, much to my disappointment. Subsequently the first score, by Carl Davies, was not liked and a second was written by Elmer Bernstein and used in the final mix.

More than a year later Mr Zee asked me what I had thought of the final music. I said that it was OK, that it provided music where we needed it

and did not do any harm. "Yes", he said, "but it was just film music. I wish I had stuck with the Schubert". He explained he had felt that Schubert was too important to use in a film. *Five Days* also meant a lot to him because of his passion for mountain climbing. On *Julia* he had asked if I could spare him a couple of weeks. I was somewhat baffled until he laughed and said "I really would like to go and climb a few mountains and in two weeks most of the snow would be gone". I think he was 72 at the time.

I was sorry *Five days* wasn't a success, as it was so personal for him and turned out to be his last film. Nevertheless he remained busy and maintained his interest in films and the people who worked on them. I was able to call upon him from time to time, being careful to make an appointment first. This formality over, he was warmly welcoming and always friendly and interested in my family and what I was doing. He would sometimes half seriously threaten to make another film so his friends would be working again.

He was a very civilised man of great integrity, in all senses a good man, and on occasions a man of unexpected wit and humour. My only regret now is that I did not know him longer.

LES HODGSON



Mr Zee 1907 - 1997

DOLBY HONOURED BY BRITISH ACADEMY



Tim Angel

Ray Dolby

The outstanding achievements of Dolby Laboratories Inc since its Chairman, Ray Dolby, set up the company in London in 1965, were honoured by the British Academy of Film & Television Arts (BAFTA) at a special dinner at the Academy's London headquarters on Wednesday 9th July. Dr Dolby was presented with a special silver BAFTA mask by the Academy's Chairman, Tim Angel OBE, to mark the company's 'outstanding technical achievement in film sound'.

In his tribute, Tim Angel said there were now 41,000 cinemas throughout the world equipped with Dolby systems, some seven and a half thousand films had been made on a Dolby format, and twenty of them had won Oscars for sound, eighteen of them in consecutive years. It was a remarkable record.

Sir Sydney Samuelson, the British Film Commissioner and a BAFTA Trustee thanked Dolby for their ongoing generosity to the Academy and Simon Relph, film producer and Vice-Chairman of BAFTA spoke of film maker's debt to Dolby.

In thanking the Academy Dr Ray Dolby described how he had had a love for film from the age of twelve. As an adult his attempts to improve film sound proved far too difficult, so consequently he addressed the 'easier' problem of noise reduction for music studios. Buoyed by his success, and with the help of Ioan Allen, Vice President of Dolby Labs, he tried again with film some years later and, using a combination of technologies, changed the sound of films forever. As he modestly put it, "It all seemed to work."

YET MORE HONOURS FOR DR DOLBY

In the last issue we reported that Dr Ray Dolby had been awarded the US National Medal of Technology to be presented by President Clinton at a White House dinner.

Now the American Electronics Association have awarded him their coveted 1997 Medal of Achievement which was presented to him at the Association's annual dinner on September 9th.

Earlier in the year he received the IEEE's Masaru Ibuka Consumer Electronics Award and an Honorary Doctor of Science degree from Cambridge University.

One wonders if there any other awards left for him to receive. He already has an Engineering award and Oscar from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, an Emmy from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, The Sam Warner Memorial Award from the SMPTE, the Alexander M Pontiatoff Gold Medal, the Audio Engineering Society Silver and Gold Awards, and is an Honorary Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

INDUSTRY NEWS

☐ Audio Ltd has opened an in-house service centre which will handle the service and repair of its professional wireless microphone systems. The company is aiming to ensure that problems are dealt with promptly and is intending a turnaround of under a week for standard service items. This new facility was made possible following Audio Ltd's move to larger premises at Audio House, Progress Road, Sands, High Wycombe, HP12 4JD. Tel: 01494 511711. Fax: 01494 539600

☐ The APRS is launching three industry awards at its 50th Anniversary celebration dinner in November of this year. The 'Most Exciting New Production' category will be selected from a cross section of music and soundtrack productions with a £5000 prize from award sponsor SSL. Studio Sound magazine will be sponsoring the APRS Award for 'Technical Achievement'; while the third award is in recognition of a 'Lifetime's Service'. The dinner is being held at the Royal Garden Hotel during the Vision & Audio 97 Exhibition.

☐ Harman Audio has acquired the remaining shares in UK mixing console manufacturer Amek Systems. Harman held 40% of Amek which came with the take over of the AKG group of companies in 1992. This further enlarges the Harman portfolio of pro audio companies whose members include Soundcraft, Studer, Lexicon, Allen & Heath, C-Audio, AKG, BSS Audio, MBL, DigiTech, JBL, Turbosound, Precision Audio Devices, Orban and dbx.

SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON TRAINING

I recently attended an open meeting arranged by the CGGB and PACT. One of the topics heavily promoted and discussed was training in the industry. The overwhelming aspect that struck me, listening to the presentations and discussions, was an apparent lack of real technical experience of the industry by those on committees organising the training schemes. This forced me to wonder at the motives behind the fund raising and levies they are promoting in the name of training. Who really benefits? How much goes in administration and furthering the careers of the organisers? A handout sheet at this meeting showed accounts of an extraordinary amount of money spent on training but no breakdown.

Don't get me wrong, I acknowledge that it has to be organised and I actively encourage training from my own narrow Production Sound Mixer's perspective. I will always welcome trainees to the Sound Crew and happily spend the time of day passing on any experience or skill I might possess. I hope it benefits those who are forced to listen! I do this because I remember being a trainee myself over 30 years ago. I particularly remember the frustration I felt at the 'old men' of my time who treated trainees with suspicion and a threat to their livelihoods and were thus reluctant to pass on their 'secrets' in case they lost their perceived advantage. I am determined not to be one of those! Like many of my contemporaries, I have, in recent years, experienced long periods of under employment. When I do work on a production and a new trainee turns up on the job, of course it forces me to think about my future. The good trainee is bright and inquisitive - was I once like that? The thought of new competition is uncomfortable since I still have a home and family to support and quite a few years yet before I can claim on my personal pension plan. But where do I go from here?

A member of the audience at the meeting brought up the subject of 'ageism'. We have all heard the stories of technicians being rejected for a job because they were too experienced! I try to put myself in the position of the person making this rejection and wonder. Why is my experience a threat to them? Why not use my experience to make the production better? Is it just another way of saying I am too old? A simplistic and maybe cynical analysis might suggest that the younger and less experienced technician is happier to accept poorer conditions of work, lower rates of pay, and will have the energy to work the excessive hours now demanded by productions. Even the use of the word 'excessive' puts me in a category of technician who knows things should be better! As my own list of credits gets longer, it also becomes more outdated. Maybe this suggests I am 'past it'. I am tempted to shorten the list to the most recent years, but these years have not necessarily been my best. A problem.

A couple of years ago, I was approached by a friend at the National Film School to help place a sound trainee on a production on which I was

working at Pinewood. It is well understood by those running the Film School that only 'hands-on' experience will eventually qualify those people they train. But I remember the incredulity I felt when my request to the Production Office was turned down, not because it would add to the payroll (the trainee was 'free') but that it would be another person to feed and transport! Times are really hard.

On the Production Sound Crew, I need an experienced Boom Operator, whose skill is so often underestimated by people who should know better. Anyone who has had the misfortune to work with an incompetent one knows what effect that can have on sound quality, camera and actors. In the real world of professional film making, this is not a job for a trainee or the inexperienced. However, my Boom Operator can train someone with a bit of talent, and similarly I can teach someone the skill of being a Sound Mixer, given time. If training is to be taken seriously, the third man or Sound Assistant on the Sound Crew is a vital investment in the future. This is not to suggest that the Assistant should be a trainee but that a trainee needs a suitable grade to which to progress.

Recently, there was a reference to my young assistant just being the Sound Department 'tea boy' and, I must admit, I snapped! The tea was not the issue but the lack of acknowledgement of the importance of experience on the job. Theory study and student films at college are great ways to learn the basic skills and technology, but only a long period spent on the professional floor will make a good film technician. It is the relationship between the departments, the 'tricks of the trade', the politics, working under pressure and the sheer endurance that cannot be taught elsewhere. I like to think I am still learning!

I have to fight for a Sound Assistant nearly every production these days. I am asked if I really need one and then told that there is no money in the budget for it. I argue that a good assistant can actually save money. By helping to make that 'impossible' shot work for sound through a pair of dedicated hands to operate another microphone, we can improve the quality and reduce visits to the post-sync theatre. Or by having someone available to go off and record specific sound effects, often expensive and hard to reproduce in post-production. But if I promote the training aspect, I don't believe I get the same attention.

Perhaps what we need is less in the way of training committees but a more direct appeal to Production Executives to maintain the Assistant grades, and to even offer them some financial incentive to engage trainees. Perhaps take on a prescribed number of trainees and avoid the training levies, and that way, all the money goes directly to trainees. Perhaps the recently announced new tax breaks should have been linked to the Production taking on trainees, in a similar manner to the Irish Film Industry. I understand the difficulties companies have to find the finance for their projects, and that they want to put it all on the screen now, but it's the future of our industry that is at stake. Productions have benefited from previous generations of trainees - it is time to repay the debt. Just a thought.

CTS STUDIOS, WEMBLEY

On the 24th June about 20 members and guests gathered in this flagship complex at Wembley, North London, for an interesting tour led by their enthusiastic managing director, Adrian Kerridge, whom we are also glad to have as one of our Members. The relatively modern building, totally dissimilar from its heavy neighbours built for the Great Empire Exhibition of 1924, was built under the direction of Dave Siddle, opening in 1971 as the De Lane Lea Music Centre and amalgamating with CTS who had to leave their Bayswater home in 1972. In 1987, the facility was acquired by Lansdowne Studios who until then had only one studio (run by Adrian) which is part of the same group, and continues to this day with its smaller sized facilities in London's Holland Park area.

Most of our feature film post-production members will have had business dealings at some time with Studio 1, one of the biggest scoring stages in Britain, being able to accommodate up to 130 players. All the Bond films except two have been scored at CTS (including at their original premises in Kensington Garden Square) and they're currently doing much work for Paramount Pictures. The warm visual ambience is created by the liberal use of wood, giving a basic reverberation period of 1.8 secs, but of course the flexibility afforded by separation screens can reduce that for chosen groups of musicians. During our visit senior engineer Dick Lewzey was setting up for the next day with the usual profusion of favourite mics for individuals plus an overhead boom carrying matched wide cardioids for L, C, R: the standard format they supply for film dubbing being L, C, R, and surround, via a Neve VRP console in the first floor control room. We also visited the film projection room, Adrian claimed it to be the only one left since all their competitors changed over to working with video tape only.

Studio 2 is equipped with an AMS Neve Capricorn digital console: it was installed over two years ago and was about to be upgraded by AMS Neve to handle the requirements of 5.1 digital audio channels for surround work. Liberal use of oak here also gives a warm feeling in the studio, which can take about 35 players,

including a few in a gallery area if greater separation was needed.

Studio 3 was referred to as their 'classic rock 'n' roll room' with its vivid coloured Hessien panels on the walls untouched for many years. Studio 3 control room however has been remodelled recently and is equipped with an automated DDA AMR24 console.

Studio 4 is the smallest room and the only one remaining of the Eastlake design period. It tends to be used for voice-over and synth programming plus overdubs where the sound of it's console, the original classic Neve 26- input desk bought from CTS Kensington (for which they've been offered "lots of money") is much in demand.

On for a glimpse of three post production rooms equipped respectively with SADIe and Sonic Solutions digital editing gear, and a Neumann helium-cooled lathe for cutting masters for vinyl discs - still in demand for 'house' music - nothing beats a DJ scrubbing a turntable with one digit!

Amongst the fascinating snippets of information Adrian dispensed was that they had three ISDN lines available to any of the studios for long distance use. Recently they'd had an 80-piece orchestra online to New York for five hours so that executives could be 'present' at the sessions without the expense of travel and hotels. Another observation that rings bitterly true with some of us is that picture editing on tape has encouraged some Directors to think it's normal to recut the night before dubbing or scoring, sometimes without warning the composer; they'd recently had a big orchestra in that hadn't played a note for the whole session because the score no longer fitted anything! "Not a British movie of course - they can't afford to do that".

A different line of comment concerned the trouble caused by there having been no standard for Exabyte until very recently; they'd sent off CD masters for processing and found the recipient complaining of differing results.... Was it ever thus!

Our final call was to the servicing workshop. After all the tidy hi-tech we'd seen earlier I was amused to notice that humble humanoids still exist: a grid chart on the wall had down the left margin 'PETE, TRIS, JAMES, TOBY' etc and along the top MILK, CREAM, SUGAR, CUP, MUG....

A most fascinating tour of a deservedly prosperous facility. Many thanks Adrian.

PETER MUSGRAVE

QUOTABLES

"In a way the writer is God - that's why so many Producers in this town are agnostics!"

Jodie Foster at the Academy Awards ceremony March 1997

"An actor's a guy who, if you ain't talking about him, ain't listening."

Marlon Brando, (The Observer, 1956)

READERS' LETTERS



Dear Sir

I have recently read your 'On Set Noise Investigation' and am delighted to see there is an organisation prepared to address the issues afflicting us all. I am a practising sound recordist for some 30 years and would be interested in details of your organisation.

Yours faithfully

RICHARD MANTON
Flamstead, Herts

Dear Bob

To be made an Honorary Member of AMPS is certainly an honour which is much appreciated, it adds to the gratitude and admiration which I have for those whose hard work and dedication finally created AMPS and now run it so successfully; years ago the desperate need for an organisation such as AMPS was often talked about but none of us ever actually did anything except talk and hope.

Yours

PETER HANDFORD
East Suffolk

Dear Bob re: Credit AMPS

Whilst with a green card I am able to work in the USA, I am almost universally regarded as an "unknown Brit". However, presumably through the success of eminent British sound mixers in the feature film industry, the AMPS flag is becoming known around the US. Discussions in the studios of the merits of such a professional body is indicative of our times.

Over the years most traditional industries in the US and UK have become more fragmented with freelance and short term contract replacing staff positions. The workforce is coming to terms with the harsher working environment already familiar to those of us in the film and television industries. This trend has produced a loyalty to one's craft or profession, so we in sound regard ourselves as TV Sound or Feature Sound Mixers rather than - say BBC sound - with our interests revolving around our craft, rather than around our employers. The professional body - AMPS in our case - is the quality standard by which we judge our peers and certainly from my experiences a very valuable international credit to both the professional and the craft

Yours

PETER EDWARDS, LVO
BCA Film & Television
Wokingham

Ed: Peter also told me that reference to AMPS in his CV during a pre production meeting with United Artists, greatly helped in clinching the assignment.

CATCHING UP ON NEWSLETTER CORRECTIONS

Issue 19, Page 7: '70 YEARS OF SYNCH SOUND' - Stanley Watkins was born in 1888, not 1988.

Issue 22, Page 10: 'EUGENE LAUSTE, FATHER OF SOUND ON FILM' - The reference to Lauste's patent No 16942 is incorrect. It should be patent No 16941. No 16942 refers to the patent for his string galvanometer modulator.

Issue 22, Page 15: 'LETTERS'

In the letter from Peter Edwards, the sentence 'Sydney Samuelson has the courtesy and professionalism to spread the work amongst his many colleagues' should have read '... spread the word amongst his many colleagues'. We apologise for this error and for any embarrassment that may have been given to those involved by this misprint which unfortunately gives an entirely different meaning from what was intended as a compliment by the letter's author.

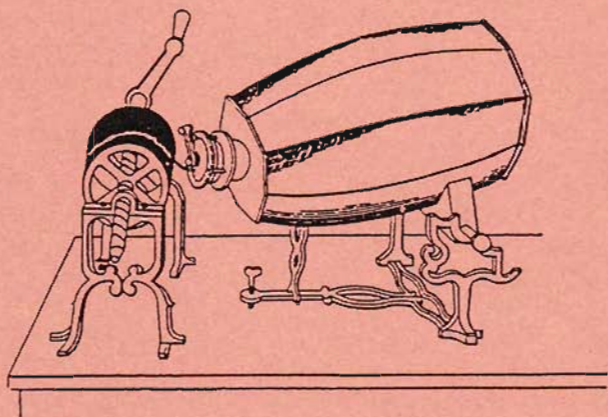
- FOR SALE -

☐ MICRON CABLE ACCESSORIES: Transmitter input cable dynamic mic, TDN15CF (8-pin LEMO - FXLR) - £20.00; Transmitter input cable line level, TL15BP (8-pin LEMO - 4mm banana) - £20.00; Transmitter antenna extension, LAE10BF (mini LEMO - BNC) - £19.00; Receiver audio output cable(s), RA10PCM (Preh - MXLR) - £12.00. All plus VAT - call Patrick Heigham on 01372 457492

☐ NAGRA TIMECODE recorder in superb condition, basic asking price £5000; Nagra accessories POA; MKE 1/2 personal mics, new, £175 each; Beyer DT48S cans as new, £125; quality mic leads/pigtails and jumpers; several alloy cases; 100 rolls 5 inch low noise Zonal tape 600/900ft per roll, £2.50; other misc items for recordists first time kit. Trading name for sale - my registered trading name (Sound Service) open to offers. Call David Wynne Jones on 01442 219144. Email: 100754.3564@compuserve.com

A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME

THE FIRST SOUND RECORDER



Sound was first recorded on the Phonautograph of Léon Scott

The ancient Greeks knew that sound as heard by the ear consisted of vibrations of air which, at certain frequencies, could even cause objects to vibrate. Records indicate that resonating panels

were commonly used to improve the acoustics of Greek theatre. Back in the year 18 BC even the Romans installed large metal vases in their amphitheatres, specially tuned to vibrate at certain frequencies. But it was not until 1857 that the first instrument for recording these vibrations was patented by Frenchman Léon Scott. He called his invention the 'Phonautograph'.

The recording medium was a piece of smoked paper attached to the surface of a drum which, when rotated, moved forwards along a helical screw. A stylus was attached to a diaphragm through a series of levers, which moved in a lateral direction when the diaphragm was vibrated by a voice. This caused a wavy line to be traced on the smoked paper. A barrel shaped mouthpiece was also included in the design. This was purely a device for accurately displaying sound waves, and it was not the inventor's intention to playback a recording.

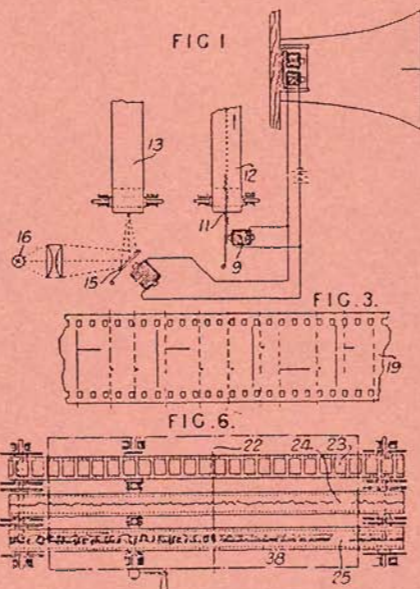
The Phonautograph promoted a flurry of activity by inventors in many countries, but it was another twenty years before Thomas Edison brought out his epoch making 'Phonograph' in 1897 which could record as well as play back. Scott's smoked paper was replaced by tin foil, and the stylus was attached directly to the diaphragm to trace a recording of variable depth (hill and dale). In subsequent models the tin foil was replaced by a wax cylinder which continued to be used for many years, Edison cylinders were finally discontinued around 1928.

JOHN ALDRED

NOT SUCH A GOOD IDEA

341,844. Recording rhythmic pulses ; sound-reproducing apparatus associated with kinematographs. BLUM, C. R., 54, Badenschestrasse, Schöneberg, Berlin. Sept. 9, 1929, No. 27420. [Classes 40 (ii) and 88 (ii).]

A band which is marked to indicate the sequence of sounds or pulses occurring in a rhythmic or accented series of sounds or pulses is prepared by first producing a sound record or curve of such sounds or pulses, and subsequently marking their positions on the band by observation of the variations in amplitude of the sound record or curve, the distance between the marks bearing a fixed relationship with the distance between the corresponding points of the sound record. The marked bands are adapted to be moved at constant speed past an index mark for use, for instance, by the conductor of an orchestra, or by an artist or artists to enable notes &c. to be reproduced in correct rhythm, or to indicate synchronism between a motion-picture film and an associated sound record. The sound record may be produced on a moving band 12, Fig. 1, by means of a stylus 11 operated by a sound-influenced electromagnet 9, or it may be traced on a light-sensitive moving band 13 by optical means comprising a sound-influenced mirror 15, light source 16 &c. Either of such curves may be employed, and may be separated along the curve by an etching process. The sound curve is preferably produced by means of a single instrument, such as a piano or key-operated bells. The sound record band and a blank band are moved together past an index mark and by observation of the variations in the amplitude of the curve, the commencement of a pulse, whether it is accented or non-accented, and its duration can



be marked on the blank band. The main accents may be represented on the band by dashes along one line and the secondary accents on a lower line as shown in Fig. 3, and the lengths of the dashes represent the durations of the individual periods of time. The musical score is then considered and the corresponding notes are entered on the band, or in the case of speech accents the relative positions of the syllables may be inserted. The band may be produced as shown in Fig. 6 by running a picture film 23, a sound record 24, and the blank band 25 over a plate 38 below an index mark 22, the sound record and blank band being driven at the same speed and the picture film at the required higher speed to ensure correspondence. If desired, from a sound curve representing the combined effects of a number of instruments, or singers, a plurality of bands can be prepared for different groups or parts.