

The Newsletter
of the Association of
Motion Picture Sound

ISSUE 35
AUTUMN 2000

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ART OF STAR WARS EXPO

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AMPS website
www.amps.net



AMPS

Take an Historical... STUDIO TOUR



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 Patrick Heigham, 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, or Fax 01732 779168, or Email: editor@amps.net

AMPS SUSTAINING MEMBERS

AKAI PROFESSIONAL

www.akaipro.com

AMS NEVE

www.ams-neve.com

ANVIL POST PRODUCTION

AUDIO DEVELOPMENTS

www.audio.co.uk

AUDIO Ltd

www.audioltltd.com

DB POST

www.dbpost.com

DE LANE LEA SOUND CENTRE

www.delanelea.com

DOLBY

www.dolby.com

DSP Ltd

www.teddington.co.uk

DTS

www.dtsonline.com

FELTECH ELECTRONICS

www.feltech.co.uk

FITZROVIA POST PRODUCTION

HARRISON

www.glw.com

NAGRA

www.nagra.com

PINEWOOD STUDIOS

www.pinewoodstudios.com

RICHMOND FILM SERVICES

RPS DATA PRODUCTS (UK)

www.rpsdataproductions.co.uk

RYCOTE

www.rycote.com

SENNHEISER

www.sennheiser.co.uk

SOLID STATE LOGIC

www.solid-state-logic.com

SONY BROADCAST & PROFESSIONAL UK

www.pro.sony-europe.com

SONY CINEMA PRODUCTS

www.sdds.com

SOUND DESIGNERS

www.sound-designers.co.uk

TECHNICOLOR

www.technicolor.com

TELEFILM VIDEO SERVICES

www.telefilm.co.uk

TWICKENHAM FILM STUDIOS

www.twickenhamfilmstudios.com

NEW AMPS MEMBERS

(SINCE SEPTEMBER 1999)

Richard ARMSTRONG	Re-Recording Mixer
Christopher ATKINSON	Sound Assistant
Trevor BARBER	Re-Recording Mixer
Ken BARTON	Sound Editor
Brian BIFFIN	Production Mixer
David BRABANTS	Production Mixer
Matthew BRACE	Student
Nicola BRANSON	Student
Matthew BRISTOWE	Chief Film Technician
Gareth BULL	Re-Recording Mixer
Martin CANTWELL	Sound Editor
Aaron COOT	Sound Assistant (Post)
John CROSSLAND	Boom Operator
Gary DESMOND	Production Mixer
Matthew DESORGHER	Boom Operator
Stuart HILLIKER	Re-Recording Mixer
Kate HOPKINS	Sound Editor
Mike JOHNSON	Student
Ashok-Kumar KUMAR	Production Mixer
Gerard LORET	Sound Editor (Assistant)
Mitchell LOW	Sound Assistant (Post)
Robin MADDISON	Production Mixer
Jerome McCANN	Sound Assistant
John MOONEY	Boom Operator
Mario MOONEY	Boom Operator
Stuart MOSER	Production Mixer
Kevin PHELAN	Head of Film Services
Simon PRICE	Sound Editor
Christopher ROUND	Production Mixer
Keith SHERRY	Equipment Designer
SMUDGER	Technical Manager
Alan SNELLING	Re-Recording Mixer
Motoo TANAKA	Student
Ian TAPP	Re-Recording Mixer
Thomas VANDYK	Sound Assistant
Dennis WEINREICH	Managing Director
Hilary WYATT	Sound Editor

TIM'S LETTER

Three hundred letters went out. Five members replied. None of the replies were critical of AMPS administration. In fact they mostly praised the work done and indicated that we should carry on in a similar fashion.

While Council members were flattered by the complimentary remarks, there was hope of a greater response to Tim's letter, and perhaps, some constructive criticism. With the lack of any such comment, the Council could easily assume that the membership is quite satisfied with the way AMPS is proceeding and complacently sit back and take it easy, but the present Council couldn't and wouldn't do that.

If AMPS is to continue it must grow, not only in membership but also in stature, authority and public recognition. It's up to the membership as well as the Council to make that happen and contribute to progress.

Get AMPS letters after your name on screen credits. Try and attend meetings, especially the AGM and Sustaining Members Show. Write in with suggestions for meetings and improvements. Send items of news and pictures of work to the Newsletter. Encourage non-members to join. It's your Association so make it earn your membership fee by providing what you want.

A word regarding criticism. The Council are aware of members who think AMPS should do something about long working hours, rates of pay, size of crews, and Health & Safety. These are trade union matters, AMPS IS NOT A TRADE UNION. That is clearly stated in the Constitution of AMPS, a copy of which is given to every member on admittance to the Association, (see the last paragraph of Aims and Objectives)

On these matters the Council advises that they be taken up with BECTU who have legal agreements with employer associations.

BOB ALLEN

The following are two of the replies received by Tim.

Dear Tim,

You ask what I wish to get from my AMPS membership. The answers are these:

- 1/ To meet old acquaintances/customers gained over my 30+ years in the film business.
- 2/ To keep in touch with what is happening in our changing world.
- 3/ As I am still supplying film equipment, to use meetings with people to promote my products, or at least to let them know what I am currently doing.
- 4/ To view films that I would not normally bother to see, in comfort at Pinewood or MPC
- 5/ To enable my wife to participate a little in my working world and to meet my friends, such as yourself.

Regarding Richard Daniels' idea of a 'vintage equipment' meeting, I am very much in favour. As a compulsive collector, I have some audio exhibits that interest me and will, hopefully, promote discussions between others. I have seen your 1944 Tonschreiber, but would love to see it again. A meeting like this is the only opportunity.

Keep up the good work you are all doing on our behalf; it is appreciated.

TERRY SUMMERS
SUMMERTONE

Dear Amps

Living about an hour and a half out of London, I can't claim to be the typical AMPS Member, as an event has to be really special to make me fight my way in and out of town on the A3 and M25 for three hours! Added to this, work this year has continued to expand to the extent that on the last five occasions that I've earmarked to attend an AMPS meeting or film show I have had to cancel; popping in after work is not an option for me, again because of the time factor.

However, from my own limited viewpoint I can make the following observations. Firstly, I think it is a very, very healthy sign that the Council thinks to ask the question at all. So many societies and associations appear to become fossilised, with those in administrative control gradually coming to the opinion that everything revolves around them and that the society exists solely to provide employment or diversion for them, while the members present an irksome distraction. AMPS is definitely NOT like this, thank God, and I am glad to see a good amount of self-examination.

AMPS, to me, fulfils many functions. Living out in the sticks, and working on technically rather basic productions (I have worked solely with camcorders for years now: I have no practical knowledge of DAT nor, heavens above, of disk recorders), I look to AMPS to keep me up to date with current trends and innovations, I try hard to attend technical meetings, and when I can't come I avail myself of the audio cassette transcription service, for which I am extremely grateful and appreciative. The AMPS Newsletter also helps to keep me up to date in this regard.

The point of sound-men (I use the term non-gender-specifically) having more clout when they act collectively rather than individually is also important. On-set noise, the

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noisy lamps and cameras, set discipline (cellphones etc): all these points can be brought to the attention of the industry more effectively by an association approaching other bodies and guilds than by the wretched mixer/recordist bleating on about it by him/her self; AMPS can bring points like these up. Other concerns are things like radio-mic frequencies and licences; the general regard in which sound is held by directors and producers (and cameramen); effective two-way feedback between the floor and post-production - AMPS does all this already and I would like to see it enhanced. Personally speaking, I have been on the shooting crew all my life as sound camera operator, maintenance, and now recordist (I was never clever or skilled enough to be a boom op!), and my knowledge of what goes on beyond the transfer bay is still very much confined to film practice. There are courses available, but they are a long way away. I read the articles in AMPS Newsletter and other journals and am utterly, *utterly* confused by the digital jargon and technology. My practical experience is that when doing a playback sequence with DAT, but shooting on a camcorder and post-production on Avid, everything ended up out of sync. I got the blame for months until, shamefacedly, the editor admitted that there was something wrong with the system and it had been Avid's fault. Burning hatred and distrust of solid state editing has been the result of this! If AMPS could bring out simple guides to post-production, written in language adapted to the meanest understanding and with unambiguous diagrams, I would be very happy. Perhaps by the same token, location recordists could gently point out to post production, again in strip cartoon form perhaps, that coping with aircraft, actors who mumble, cameramen who can't light out boom shadows and directors who will do retake after retake for dialogue but not for any other sound reason, makes for a full life for the location crew. Keeping *exact* notes in the wind and bloody rain, setting user bits and all the little things that make life a little easier for those lolling in their comfortable seats back at the studio, sometimes represent the straw that broke the camel's back!

I rant and rave. However, out of all this I think my message is that AMPS is damned good and is already doing everything right. Just keep going onward and upward. Falling attendance could just be that there's a lot of work about. I haven't been able to come for ages, but I regard AMPS as an essential to our industry. Being chiefly a sound recordist who works on his own, relations with other sound-men in the local area are always tinged with a little reserve; we are in competition for the same limited work-pool and so we cannot be completely frank about what we know, although of course we all get on well. With AMPS it is different. I want to share any new bit of insight I get and to know how other guys have surmounted unusual problems that have cropped up. As I said earlier, reports from Members who have used new pieces of gear are invaluable.

Just keep going, chaps. I value you extremely.

NICK FLOWERS

AN ICY LETTER FROM A HOT CLIMATE

Dear Editors

While I would like to thank Bob for his most interesting article *It Will Record*, I take strong exception to his derisive comment that it was studio policy in the late 50s and early 60s, and I quote; "to post-synch all sound recorded outside the walls of the sound stage".

I do not know which major studio employed you Bob in that period but I had the pleasure of working at ABPC for seven exciting years.

Believe me, Tony Lumkin and Len Shilton were at the forefront of all possible ways to use original location tracks. Mike Bradbury designed and built a background noise suppressor years before the Fairchild was introduced. Jack Lovelock made windshields for the RCA 10,001 mics to enable them to be used on exteriors.

The music scoring theatre was equipped to reproduce a broad range of conditions so that a sequence was not discarded for the sake of a sentence or two, and was well cared for by Eric Baynham.

Add to this the talents and endeavours of recordists such as Norman Cogg, Les Hammond, Cecil Mason, Len Abbott, David Hildyard, Bert Ross and others. Throw in the expertise and 'unit-togetherness' of boom-ops such as Dennis Whitlock, Don Wortham, Tommy Staples, Derek Kavanagh et al, and you have a fine sound department, dedicated to usable location sound whenever possible.

You dismiss all this with one phrase. maybe you were working on documentaries at the time, or maybe you just don't know.

Yours sincerely

KEN OSBORNE
Pattaya City, Thailand

Bob Allen replies: *Thank you for your letter Ken. It's always good to hear from members commenting on Newsletter content, even if it is taking exception to statements made therein.*

My statement regarding post-synch attitudes towards location recoding was certainly not intended to be 'mocking or scoffing' (as the word 'derisive' means) at sound crews, whether studio employed or freelance. I should have made it clearer that it was producers, who at the time were the studios, that I was referring to.

I would be the first to agree that although the producer may decree that to save time on location everything would be guide track, sound crews never took that to be a reason to sit back and take it easy. It was usually regarded as a challenge to get as much usable track and humanly possible.

Your long list of names of sound people, I too have the greatest respect for them and I could add many more names who did great work during their careers in motion picture sound.

I'm sorry if I offended you, or any other people in our business. I assure you no insult was intended. However from my own experience as a freelance sound mixer, who also worked through the period in question, I don't consider that any comments in my article are completely incorrect.

DON'T SCRAP YOUR NAGRA 4S THERE'S LIFE IN THE OLD GIRL YET

Comments on NagraMaster

compiled by Peter V Meiselmann CAS

Recording on NagraMaster is admittedly a political issue. You have to convince production that running at 15ips is worth the extra expense in tape stock. Tape stock is the cheapest link in the production chain, and as humiliating as it is to have to argue about it, it is well worth the effort.

The following statements should clear up some of the confusion and remind Nagra IV-S users and post production people of an existing superior recording equalisation.

Dan Dugan of Dan Dugan Sound Design, San Francisco

Most Nagra users ignore the second 15ips position on the 4S speed switch labelled NagraMaster. NagraMaster is a special equalisation which gives a greatly improved signal-to-noise ratio at 15ips compared with NAB standard. With current high level tapes like Quantegy 480, it compares favourably with DAT recording.

Recording at the standard dialogue speed of 7.5ips requires a substantial treble boost (pre-emphasis) inside the recording amplifier. This is to compensate for losses in the recording process. This treble boost reduces the high frequency headroom. It is possible to record all the way up to +4 modulation at the lower frequencies, but by the time you are up to 10kHz, the boost has hit the ceiling, so though the frequency response is flat at low and moderate levels, high treble levels will saturate.

The maximum recorded level at 10kHz with today's tapes is 5 - 10dB lower than the low frequency maximum. This is no problem with voices or classical music because the peak energy spectrum of these sources also roll off at higher frequencies. Also at 7.5ips there is no complementary roll-off in the playback, as there is in the RIAA disk equalisation, so the overall phase shift with frequency, called 'group delay' is an inherent sonic limitation of 7.5ips recording.

At 15ips, no treble boost is needed. Indeed, with today's tapes, a small amount of treble roll-off is required. This makes the 15ips NAB record EQ good for recording hot cymbals or synthesisers, or treble rich sound effects like hissing steam, that would have to be turned down to avoid the treble saturation at 7.5ips. Not having the pre-emphasis at 15ips also means much less group delay.

Kudelski's trick with NagraMaster EQ is to use the 7.5ips treble boost for recording at 15ips. Then a complementary treble roll-off is used in playback to restore flat frequency response. This makes a dramatic decrease in the tape noise level, and furthermore, shapes the noise spectrum to a



velvety hush rather than an intrusive hiss. This has to be heard to be appreciated. NagraMaster is more like digital than any other analogue system, in my opinion.

There are two disadvantages to using NagraMaster. First, you have to be aware of the possibility of high frequency saturation due to the pre-emphasis. This is no problem if you are used to recording at 7.5ips. The pre-emphasis is the same, so the same recording level habits will serve. The second problem is confusion at the transfer house. You have to make sure that everybody down the line knows how to handle NagraMaster before you use it for a project. NagraMaster tapes must be transferred either from a Nagra (IV-S or T-Audio), or from a standard NAB machine followed by a NagraMaster roll-off EQ. Recordists "in the know" about NagraMaster have achieved spectacular results.

Will Harvey, Head of the Film Dept, The Music Annex, San Francisco

NagraMaster recording is a straight analogue path without any noise reduction to degrade the signal. For ease and simplicity, the format cannot be equalled. Using the NagraMaster format in production yields superior analogue performance and sound quality on a robust and common format.

Agememnon Andrianos, Production Sound Mixer, San Rafael

I used NagraMaster on *The Absent Minded Professor* starring Robin Williams. Robin Williams never does a take the same way twice and very often would add or enhance his performance with vast changes in level or action. NagraMaster gave me the cushion needed to capture his spontaneity on the tracks.

The greater dynamic range of NagraMaster allows you to under-record a little, providing greater headroom for sudden level changes, from screams to whispers. You can record with confidence and tape noise is exceptional for quiet scenes.

NagraMaster allows for a quieter recording, measuring about 5dB better signal-to-noise ratio than 15ips NAB. However it sounds better than that due to the frequency spectrum of the tape noise. It

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has a smoother or velvet-like quality that is less irritable or intrusive to the recording.

NagraMaster is the best recording EQ for 1/4 inch tape that is available on all Nagra IV-s machines.

Nelson Stoll, Nelson Stoll Audio Services, San Francisco

I have been using NagraMaster for twenty years to record the sound for most of my feature films such as *Dune*, *Basic Instinct*, *Mrs Doubtfire*, including Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rainmaker*. NagraMaster provides a 5dB improvement in signal-to-noise ratio over NAB and subjectively sounds like more as the spectrum of the noise level is less audible. The recordings yield much greater low level detail and the overall noise level is quite a bit lower.

Tape stocks have improved quite a bit since Kudelski first implemented NagraMaster. Because of this, a higher recording flux level can be applied overall to further improve the dynamic range. For general work I recommend a record flux level of 560nW/m for 0dB on the Nagra meter. This yields over 75 dB signal-to-noise with about 0.7% THD 'A' weighted for maximum level. When the Nagra limiter is used properly, the practical dynamic range is closer to 80dB. At this flux level, print-through can be audible if there is no background noise when recording high level transients using certain tape stocks. The signal-to-print of recent stocks has improved to make this a less common problem. Of course, there is no free lunch. The trade-off is high frequency headroom, which is about 5dB less than with 15ips NAB. The limiting of high frequencies can be heard on a fully modulated recording of breaking glass, cymbals or any other event that contains excessive high frequencies, but for virtually all dialogue and effects recordings for film, that compromise is not a problem.

Tom Knox, Product Specialist, Nagra USA, Nashville

The world of film production sound and music mastering finds itself faced with a variety of disk, DAT and at least half a dozen other workable recording formats. With modern digital audio equipment design so strongly driven by the personal computer industry, we find ourselves constantly seeking more butts, higher sampling frequencies, faster access, better data reduction algorithms and fatter storage devices. Does all the marketing pressure to use the latest - greatest 'stuff' make the work of production sound mixing and transfer any easier, more reliable, sonically superior or affordable? NagraMaster is a virtually no-risk means to improve the sound quality of IVS or IVS-TC production sound recordings.

If the transfer facility is using a Nagra T,

NagraMaster is available simply by resetting a standards switch in the electronics box. For facilities not using a Nagra T, a NagraMaster box is simply connected into the audio path at the output of the playback machine. The sound mixer is urged to record independent 1kHz and 10kHz reference tones at the head of each reel to verify alignment of the playback chain. Of course, a test reel recording is recommended before production begins, particularly if the persons involved have not used NagraMaster previously.

To guarantee accurate and problem-free transfers, it is advisable to provide the transfer facility with a NagraMaster box, unless they use a Nagra T or Nagra IVS-TC for playback. Dialogue editors will also need the box to download tapes recorded non NagraMaster into their workstations.

Reprinted from the Journal of the Cinema Audio Society

CAN YOU HELP ?

DESMOND WILCOX 1931 - 2000

Desmond was scheduled to be interviewed on behalf of the BECTU History Project, now his untimely death has robbed the archive of a record of the life, times, opinions and philosophy of a giant of British television documentary. We are therefore seeking reminiscences about the man and his programmes (*This Week*, *Man Alive*, and many others) from those of you who worked with him over the years. If you are a former colleague and you would be prepared to be interviewed, please contact me:

Sir Sydney Samuelson CBE
History Project Committee
BECTU
111 Wardour Street,
London W1V 4AY

Fax: 020 8458 1957
Email: sydneysam@compuserve.com

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A TOURIST IN

HOLLYWOOD

On the return journey from my last trip to New Zealand I decided to stop over for a couple of days in Hollywood. I had been there once before, about 30 years ago, shortly after I had worked on *The Danny Thomas Show European Holiday* and was well looked after by the show producers during my stay. They arranged visits to the Disney Studios, the Glen Glen Sound Studios, and seats in the audience during the filming of an *I Love Lucy* show episode.

This time I'd made no contacts and was going to be a tourist with the object of taking in the Warner Bros Studio Tour, and more especially, the Paramount Studio Tour. I was hoping to be able to see the studio main gate as seen in several Paramount movies but made especially famous in *Sunset Boulevard* when Gloria Swanson, playing the part of a faded silent star on a visit to her old studio, is stopped at the gate and is recognised by Jonsey, a security guard from her day who was still working there.

The gate is still there, however, it's now not the main entrance. When Paramount took over the adjoining RKO Studios, extra land was also acquired which moved the front boundary out to Melrose Avenue, where there is now a replica of the original gate.

I was booked in at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel on Hollywood Boulevard, where the first Oscar Presentation Ceremony took place in 1929. The hotel is just over the road from Grauman's Chinese Theater where the stars hand prints and signatures are set in concrete. What could be more touristy?

Entering the hotel I passed a bronze statue of Charlie Chaplin, seated on a bench, with a live child either side being photographed by loving parents - obviously a favourite tourist spot. At the desk, along with my room key, I was handed a note informing me that the swimming pool was closed for the day due to filming. Other guests expecting to lounge around the pool, sipping suitable syrups must have been disappointed. Not me. This might mean a chance to see a real live

Hollywood crew in action and even talk sound to someone.

Once settled into my huge old-fashioned but comfortable room with views of large neon signs (which undoubtedly, after dark, would flash on and off illuminating the room in the traditional Hollywood film noir fashion) I called up Warner Bros hoping to book in for a tour that afternoon. Not a chance! All tours for that afternoon or the next day, in fact for the rest of the week were fully booked. So that was Warner Bros off the schedule. A call now to Paramount. What if they were fully booked too? But they don't take bookings. "Come when you like", said the voice

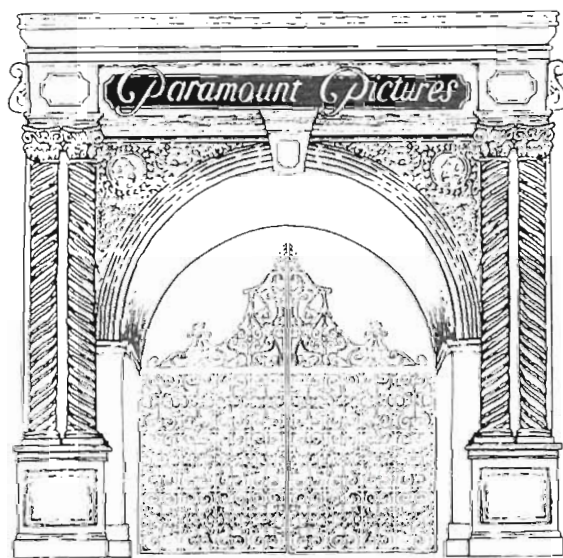
on the phone, "Walking tours start from the Melrose gate every half hour from 10am".

So what to do with the afternoon? First have lunch and think about it. As I entered the hotel restaurant, there's Charlie Chaplin sitting alone at a table having a drink! What a lifelike wax work I thought. Then as I waited to be seated 'Charlie' picked up his glass and drank from it. Clever animatronics I thought as the head waiter seated me at the next table. While I scanned the menu a person approached 'Charlie' giving him a sheet of paper mumbled something and left. That blew it,

'Charlie' picked up the paper and peered myopically at it. He was real - a person dressed and made up like Charlie. After looking at the form for a few minutes, 'Charlie' turned to me and asked if perhaps I could lend him my reading glasses as he didn't have his with him. Seems he was an extra, or rather she was, as it was a girl in the Charlie costume, on call with the unit filming by the pool. She needed to sign her daily chit, so I obliged with my glasses and was thanked by the Charlie look-alike, which was more fun than having my picture taken sitting by the bronze Charlie at the hotel entrance.

After lunch I ventured out into Hollywood Boulevard. The brass inlays in the footway paving stones are still there but 30 years on from my last visit I hardly knew any of the pop and US TV stars that have been added over those years. I walked down to Grauman's Chinese Theater to renew my memories and was horrified to find the entrance yard that has the hand and footprints of the stars covering the ground, crowded with souvenir stalls and even a photograph stand

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STUDIO TOUR

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

(continued from page 7)

whereby putting your head through a hole in a mural flat you can have your picture taken being kissed by a film star. The proliferation of tawdry souvenir shops along Hollywood Boulevard, full of ghastly junk, cheap in quality but not in price made me thankful that 30 years ago I'd seen a better Hollywood than this crowded tourist trap. So with jet lag catching up I returned to the hotel for a rest.

Back at the hotel I noticed that the film crew had moved from the pool and were now shooting in what appeared to be the ballroom. A section of the hotel foyer had been roped off to keep the public out, or perhaps the crew who were mingling about behind the ropes, in. I approached for closer look and spotted a sound trolley so I spoke to the guy standing by it. He was the boom op. I introduced myself and after a few words the mixer came up and joined the conversation. His name was Alan Beyer. He wasn't a local - he came from New York and was here by invitation of the director with who he has worked previously. The picture working title was *Blow*, a 1930s story about a drug dealer. They were providing playback for a ballroom scene which was being handled by his crew so there was time to chat.

Problems with noise, HMIs, ballasts etc, impatience of directors, editorial departments lack of understanding about new techniques - you name any of our problems here in the UK and according to Alan they are exactly the same in the USA.

The studio lot water tower, visible for miles around - LA fog permitting



Some of the many sound stages



The original old gate. The guide explains that the fountain now in front represents the snowy mountain of Paramount's logo



Well, that chat helped to fill up my afternoon and made me feel that movies were still made in Hollywood after all.

That evening after dinner I spent an interesting hour looking at the excellent collection of early photographs of Hollywood environs and movie memorabilia displayed on the balcony surrounding and overlooking the large hotel lobby. Amongst the interesting facts displayed are - at the end of 1928 there were 16 sound recording machines in Hollywood but by the end of 1929 there were 116 - in 1929 there were 9,000 cinemas equipped for sound, by the end of 1930 the number had risen to 13,500 - *Showboat* (1928) was the first feature to use the Western Electric Light Valve - *The Perfect Crime* (1928) was the first feature to use the RCA Photophone.

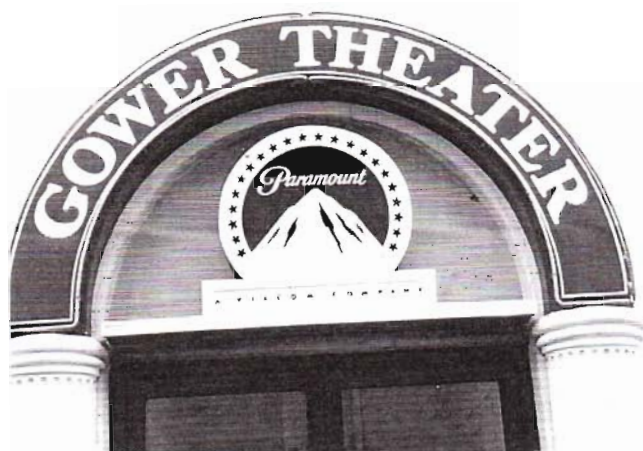
The Paramount Studio Tour the next day was well worth the effort. I was in a group of ten people led by a plump young lady who seemed to have a good basic training in all the popular historical and technical trivia relating to both RKO and Paramount. In welcoming the group she pointed out that as these were working studios we probably wouldn't get into any of the stages but we might, as we walked about between the stages, catch glimpses of the stars who were on call that day, adding the warning that, if we did, they must not be approached or photographed. Despite the list of star names she reeled off, glimpses caught during the walkabout were none. I asked if it would be possible to see something of the sound department. Reminding me that it was a working studio, our Guide agreed to see what she could do, perhaps the ADR stage might be possible.

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above : Views of several of the permanent U.S. city style street sets, all kept in immaculate condition with practical street furniture and lighting facilities. Some are facades built onto sound stage walls.

left : A last view of the old gate



The tour started off with a screening in the Gower Theater, made up of clips from Paramount movies from way way back until the present day. A most interesting collection and good fun trying to remember which ones I'd seen at the time of their first release.

Walking about the studio streets I was most impressed with the tidiness of everything. The well laid out grounds and roads, the planting of trees and gardens, the well kept look of all the office buildings. The many permanent exterior sets of American city streets, which appeared to cover most US architectural styles, were most impressive. All were in first class decorative condition too.

The tour didn't make the ADR stage - a session was in progress. We did, however, gain access to the scoring stage which our lady guide informed us could accommodate 200 musicians and was often hired out to record companies. I have to admit it is quite a remarkable size, especially it's height.

There was also a look in at the props department and a few minutes in one of the large stages fitted out with tiers of audience seats, reminding me of 30 years ago when I sat in similar seats to watch that episode of *I Love Lucy* being filmed. In those pre video days, three 35mm film cameras were used and as the guide had been using the word 'filming' with reference to various TV shows, I asked her if they still used film cameras. Film, she said, was used for drama productions but video for game and talk shows.

The fact that I had been privileged to see an *I Love Lucy* show being shot impressed several on the tour, most of whom were more interested in TV than in movies. This must be the norm for the studio tour, as most of our guide's stories and facts were to do with TV shows.

On the way back to the hotel, I managed to get the cab driver to pass the old Warner Bros Hollywood Studio where *The Jazz Singer* was shot. It's still in use, now called 'The Lot'. Hopefully it will be Burbank on my next LA stop over.

BOB ALLEN

AMPS GENERAL MEETING REPORT

AN EVENING WITH FAIRLIGHT

Unfortunately it was a rather small number of AMPS members who chose to take advantage of Fairlight's invitation to spend an evening at their North London HQ for refreshments and a look at their most recent product range. Originally scheduled for a month earlier, the meeting had been postponed to allow us to see the upgraded range previewed at the IBC exhibition a week before.

2000 is Fairlight's 25th anniversary and MD of Fairlight Europe, Chas Rowden, outlined the direct line of product development from the original Computer Musical Instrument (CMI), with its firsts of sampling and waveform editing, all the way through to the MFX editing system. A few years ago Fairlight moved its business headquarters to Los Angeles and now employs 180 staff. Chas then briefly ran through the complete updated product range and where it they are being used. It would appear that Hollywood has found homes for a large number of MFX3 editors with over 100 at Warner Bros where they complete some ridiculous number of hours of episodic TV every week!

Fairlight's Simon Daniels then presented the new MFX3.48 to us, the first of their products to make use of what they refer to as QDC Technology - an application of Analog Devices' SHARC DSP processors to increase speed and processing power, plus the implementation of Fast Wide SCSI. In practical terms this means that the new MFX can punch in and out on all 48-tracks at 24-bit/48kHz using only a single hard drive.

We were also introduced to Merlin, a 48-track hard disk recorder related to the MFX but with simpler editing and processing capabilities. All the audio used at the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony was both recorded on, and played back on the day, direct from a Merlin system.

Other Fairlight products such as Fame 2 and the simpler Prodigy 2 mixer/workstations, DADPlus digital 'dubber' and the ViVid video disk recorder were briefly covered before a demo of networked MFX/Merlin production. Following a Q&A /hands-on session, the meeting retired to enjoy the refreshments and excellent selection of wines that Fairlight had provided.

Many thanks to Fairlight for their hospitality and a very informative evening.

KSA

The AMPS Newsletter's editors would like to thank Peter Musgrave for his kind assistance in keying and subbing some of the text used in this and the last issue (for which we omitted acknowledgement). It was much appreciated.

AUDIO AT THE IBC 2000 CONVENTION

Amsterdam is an excellent location for large conventions - easy access, wide range of hotels, and a very pleasant compact city to wander around, but if you'd had tackled this year's IBC Convention with any sense of completeness, there wouldn't have been much time for the latter this year. The Convention has grown exponentially and now occupies all 14 halls and many of the other meeting rooms available at the RAI Centrum. It will almost certainly have to start looking for a new venue in future years.

For the audio-only visitor, the IBC has always been something of an oddity. Hall 9 is nominally referred to as the 'Audio Hall', containing about 80% of the show's audio exhibitors which is convenient. However finding the other remaining 20%, dispersed throughout the other video and broadcast halls is a daunting task when you consider that walking from one end of the expo complex to the other can take ten minutes. Some companies had chosen to be in with the video post production suppliers - Euphonix, Soundtracs; while others had sister companies that were video orientated - Avid/Digidesign, Lightworks/Fairlight; and others such as SADiE were just unlucky in the draw.

While IBC 2000 posted superlatives on square footage or exhibition space and visitor numbers, new products were less in evidence, partially explained by the proximity of the LA AES Convention that followed a matter of a week later, with many manufacturers delaying their launches accordingly.

MICROPHONES

The application of digital control and processing to the extremes of the audio signal chain, that first appeared at the end of last year, was again in evidence. **Audio-Technica's** AT895 Adaptive-array Microphone System is a good example. It houses 5 capsules in a form just about small enough for hand holding together with a processor box. Clever manipulation of the signals allows the performance of the mic to be adjusted to substantially reject background noise, either as an interview mic or shotgun replacement. If technology can add multiple applications, this mic becomes cost-effective.

Multi-faceted **Canford Audio** presented an alternative approach to microphone use in high ambient sound with a bandwidth-limited addition to their lavalier mic range. Engineered for voice frequencies, it maintains a relatively flat output between 100 Hz and 10kHz.

Most of the other microphone manufacturers were concentrating on their wireless systems. **AKG** focussed on the new PR81 portable wireless receiver allowing easy mobile use; **Sennheiser** majored on their 3000 and 5000 wireless series in

both portable and studio forms; **Lectrosonics** introduced several new UHF wireless products including the UH300 and UH110 XLR plug transmitters that fit any XLR equipped mic, and a number of receiver systems that includes a computer interface option.

For those occasions where a wireless boom mic might be needed, **Micron** were showing the Phantom Boom, a battery operated phantom power feed for a boom mounted condenser mic that can then interface with a belt style transmitter. This gives the operator complete independence of cables.

Audio Ltd introduced their Envoy range of wireless systems that offer a wide range of capsule options. Most interesting however is the infrared technology now being used to remotely control mics - operating frequency, on/off, battery status and other functions set or interrogated by a small device about the size of a key fob. A software package was also shown that allows comprehensive control of a wireless system including a survey for other nearby users and deadspots.

Rycote, best known as a manufacturer of furry windshields, were showing a range of tiny hairy versions for miniature mics, looking for all the world like a rather frightening insect but they work and prompt the question why it hadn't been done before - mini mics still suffer from wind noise problems after all.

SPEAKERS

The other end of the signal chain was less well represented. Dynaudio, Miller & Kreisel and PMC had all tailored their displays for 5.1 surround use. However, **PMC's** compact active AML1 speakers tentatively introduced earlier in the year are now a full product and available in a wide range of colours while maintaining a convincing performance from such a small box.

Genelec's stand could be felt across most of the audio hall. A new 1093A compact active subwoofer system was generating output down to 20Hz. A selection of broadcast suitable monitors from their product range were shown including their S30D and 2029B monitors that are equipped with digital inputs and introduced earlier in the year.

MIXERS

A wander around the IBC confirmed that digital consoles totally dominate the large scale mixer market, and while they don't have it all their own way in smaller models there are clear signs they may soon will. **SSL's** featured console was the digital Aysis Air Mobile, a more compact and operationally simplified version of the Aysis Air designed specifically for large scale outside broadcast applications or space limited studios. The RIO Grande option to increase I/O capacity on the consoles was also announced. Just a few stands away, **AMS Neve** were also all digital but their featured console was the Libra Live Series II, being shown in Europe for the first time. This is also a

(continued from page 11)

designed for large scale live/production work in the studio or on outside broadcast.

Studer launched the M2 version of the established D950 digital console. This has a modified control surface, a new central section and expanded production features that will make the console faster to use yet more sophisticated in production. Sales to several post facilities including Pinewood were announced. Other large scale console makers were present with latest versions - **Euphonix** with the System 5, **Soundtracs** with all three of their digital consoles, while **Amek** kept an analogue flag flying with their Media 51 5.1 capable console which is now in production form.

Audix Broadcast is not a name usually associated with the post business but their had an intriguing prototype idea to illuminate the fader knob to give information about channel status using colour and illumination intensity - in a multilayered digital world this could be useful.

Yamaha were showing their PM1D digital mixing system but with little guidance about how it may fit within a studio environment although in theory the possibilities are there. **Sony** chose not to show any audio products on their stand, leaving it to HHB on the next door stand to support that side and chose to feature the Sony DMX-R100 digital console shown in production form.

RECORDERS

Much of **HHB's** stand was however given to promotion of their new MDP500 Portadisc portable MiniDisc recorder. This is a thoroughly 'professionalised' concept where almost every possible problem with the use of MiniDisc has been covered. Particularly interesting is the provision of an USB interface for the transfer of audio to computer for editing, ISDN or e-mail transfer. With a battery life in excess of 3 hours and a weight (with batteries) of 2kg, this looks an increasing serious product.

Nagra were demonstrating the ARES-P handheld solid state recorder (with integral microphone) in production form. Originally launched earlier this year in conjunction with Digigram, this is now a totally Nagra product and completes the ARES product family. A second version, the RCX220, also incorporates an USB port for file transfer plus an onboard processor for PC based workstations offering the capabilities of a Digigram PCX card. While apparently announced last year, the Nagra D digital reel-to-reel recorder is now in Mk2 form although the only significant difference is the addition of 24-bit/96kHz Ad and D/A converters.

EDITORS / WORKSTATIONS

SADiE established their reputation with low cost digital editing systems for radio use several years ago. One of the major introductions at IBC was the replacement for the original SADiE Classic. Known as RADiA, it is their new entry-level platform. With 4 inputs/outputs, it can replay 24 tracks at 48kHz and is optimised for the new SADiE V4 operating

software introduced across the complete range. It will be available as a PCI card for user installation or as a complete system with removable SCSI storage.

Fairlight, celebrating 25 years, introduced what they refer to as QDC Technology across their full range of workstations with the claimed benefits of speed and functionality. Most broadcast orientated is the MFX3.48 which is now capable of 48-track simultaneous punch-in/out and crossfades on a single hard drive. Other advantages are instant waveform displays and enhanced performance.

DTS, squeezed into a corner stand with excellent visibility were generally promoting the DTS format but had the DTS-6AD Cinema Processor and the DTS-ES Extended Surround adapter in evidence.

Dolby followed a more broadcast theme with products aimed at Dolby E although the DM100 Portable Audio Monitor - a handheld device that allows the user to identify the integrity and format of a digital audio signal (PCM, Dolby E or Dolby Digital) with status info and audio monitor using a small internal speaker - is potentially very useful. Unusually for Dolby - this product was being shown in a range of 'fun colours' for visitors to select their preference.

Credit should be given to the IBS who held a Mini-Conference during the IBC on the subject of Surround Sound with numerous speakers and examples in a room that they had spent hours acoustically treating. As an outpost of audio amongst a sea of near indifference, it was most welcome. If you doubt this to be the case, a casual stroll amongst the video manufacturers demos would reveal audio wildly out of sync with picture in most cases, and rarely an attempt to correct it.

I had the opportunity to catch a screening of Toy Story 2 in digital projection which was impressive. Equally interesting was the fact that the audio tracks also originate from the same hard drive as the picture and are full, uncompressed linear digital audio on all channels - which should give the industry something to think about!

KSA

INDUSTRY NEWS

The BBC have ordered an Avant digital film console from SSL. The 24-fader console will be installed in a BBC regional facility for 'high-end' drama production during January..... During the recent US AES exhibition, Glenn Sanders of Zaxcom recorded the AES31 seminar on a Deva. The audio files were then distributed to various workstation manufacturers for playback. A large cheer went up when each workstation played back the recorded files in the auditorium. AES31 is the new standard for file interchange between disk-based recording systems..... DAR is to supply a network of four 24-track SoundStation Storm workstations to Soho's Silk Sound as part of the facility's major refurbishment project.....

THE PERFECT STORM

I was again this month fortunate enough to be in London on the same day as the AMPS' Pinewood Theatre 7 film showing of *The Perfect Storm*. In the absence of Graham Hartstone, Peter Musgrave and other Council members it fell upon me to introduce the movie. This gave the opportunity and great pleasure to announce that in the audience, accompanied by his granddaughter and two great grandchildren, was Hon Member Fred Hughesdon, whose 91st birthday it was that very day. Those present joined with me in wishing him many happy returns and gave him a really rousing round of applause. We all hope to see you at many more screenings, Fred.

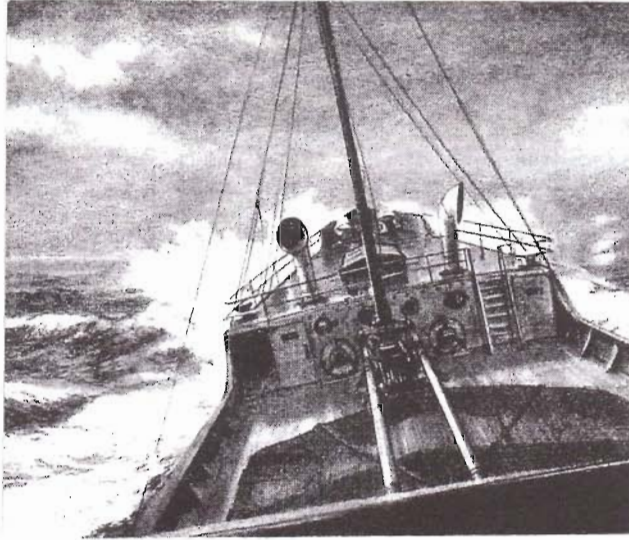
My hand wave to the projectionist to signal the show to start left me standing in the dark so, rather than stumble my way back to a perfect seat somewhere in mid auditorium, I slid into a seat in the middle of the very front row. I don't think that I've ever sat so close to the screen since I was a kid of six or seven, when at that age like so many young Saturday matinee patrons, as the doors of the cinema opened I charged straight for the front row considering them to be the best seats in the house.

In my Theatre 7 front row seat I had complete peripheral vision. I was unaware of the side edges of the screen. The top of the picture was out of view and I was aware of only a small amount below the bottom edge of the screen. It was almost like watching an IMAX show.

I was really in the picture. When the fishing boat rolled and pitched my eyes wobbled. I rolled and pitched with the boat. I was almost a member of the crew and felt that I too should be up there on deck gaffing giant swordfish and heaving them onboard. However as I wasn't getting wet or feeling seasick, I was able to adjust to the fact that I was only watching a movie.

In taking such a close position to the screen and stereo speaker system I was a little apprehensive about the loudness I might have to endure, basing it on the fact that many AMPS members feel that shows in Theatre 7 are too loud. Well I can now say I am convinced my theory that the level of sound should be relative to size of picture whatever the size or shape of the auditorium is correct. Dialogue level shouldn't give the actor a bigger voice than the picture gives him physical size. Comments on this theory are most welcome.

Sitting so close to the large screen with large



images of actors, the level of the voices seemed to me to be right, although the diction of some of the cast left a lot to be desired. Other sound components were in good proportion. In this position I was unaware of the surround speakers but the stereo effect was excellent.

The post production sound crews led by the sound editor Wylie Stateman and chief rerecording mixer John Reitz, did an excellent job and deserve high praise. I felt very sorry for Production Sound mixer Keith Wester and his crew (I wonder was he chosen because his name suggested strong winds?) It must have been bloody hard work fighting the special effects. I also felt a certain respect for the male caste having to handle the gaffing of giant swordfish and the gallons of water deluged over them, but then, was it done digitally? Digital or not they did a most convincing job.

For me, the fictional story content was pretty cliché ridden, we even had the old 1942 Bette Davis - Paul Henreid routine of lighting two fags off one match. The direction and imagination in the shore sequences at the start and end were very dull and uninspired. The usual syrupy American sentiment at the start almost made me sick before we even got to sea.

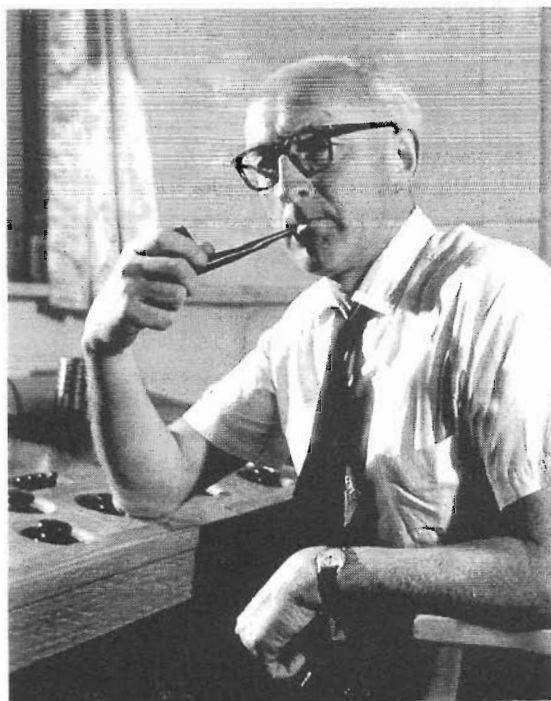
Although the titles at the beginning of the movie told me it was based on a true story, I was unaware as I watched how the story would turn out. I was fairly convinced that in true American movie style it would be a happy ending, the boat intact with crew and catch would make their home port as great heroes and firm friends. It was therefore to me a big surprise, and I must say a pleasant one movie-wise, that the producers had let the boat sink with all hands. I only wish they hadn't returned to the over sentimental loved ones back on shore. The shot of the single head bobbing about alone and helpless in the storm lashed Atlantic would for me have been the perfect image to leave the theatre with. The title telling of the numbers of lives lost fishing for sword fish over the past years could well have supered over this scene. (What do they do with the swordfish anyhow?)

Just how the storm scenes were done I've no idea and I don't really want anyone to tell me. They were really impressive so congratulations to all involved. By the extra long list of digital crew credits I wondered if anybody actually got wet.

I don't know how long the movie took to make. In the silent days, epic feature film publicity often made pronouncements such as 'Two years in the making with a caste of thousands'. By the length of the end credits on *Perfect Storm*, the publicity claim could well be 'With a crew of thousands'!

BOB ALLEN

TRIBUTES TO
KEN CAMERON OBE, BSc, Hon AMPS
 1/12/15 - 8/8/00



From Peter Musgrave

Most of us hadn't seen Ken for many years, yet his image and personality remain more vividly in the mind than colleagues' still active today. I first met him around 1954, when an assistant on a Group 3 feature dubbing at Beaconsfield Studios. Anvil Films was newly formed from the ashes of the Crown Film Unit (they even adapted the old logo), and needed an editor for their first documentary contracts. Ken offered the job to me - I was so inexperienced that I was amazed, but he coaxed me into it. Economy reigned: no assistant, and an unheated cutting room, but I learned fast, including that underneath Ken's sometimes testy exterior was a kindly, vastly knowledgeable man who disliked waste and pomposity.

His dual-purpose theatre was cramped during the bigger music sessions, but Ken was in his element and greatly valued by composers, for whom he'd pour huge scotches at sundown.

In 1974 he wrote an article for the GBFE Journal (and ticked me off for changing a semicolon) which jovially ridiculed the rapidly increasing technology 'needed' to record music; it still reads amusingly. On click tracks: "What are we coming to if a composer, conducting his own music to a score which he has timed, does not know when the first beat of each bar must come? They are not composers, they are glorified fruit machines." On mixing desks: "Dozens of knobs and switches, most of which never seem to be touched . . . dominate a control room which is vast only because it has to accommodate them all together with the Producer, Director, Editor, their wives and children on holiday, their assistants, their dogs, their chauffeurs . . . and people who have come in out of the rain."

He disliked ACT (today's BECTU). When they put pressure on him to decide if he was a boss OR a technician, he made them advertise his own job in such a way that only he fitted the description!

From John Aldred

Ken Cameron was the brother of the late James Cameron, the well known writer and broadcaster. I first met Ken at Pinewood Studios in 1942, where he was Sound Supervisor of the newly created Crown Film Unit. Although I was in the Army Film Unit, our paths were continually crossing and since we both used the same dubbing theatre I was often 'on loan' to Ken. He once told

me that he started his career as an electrical engineer in the Glasgow Tramways Dept, but transferred to the Post Office Film Unit, which became the Crown Film Unit upon the outbreak of war.

Ken's one passion was for music, and he would choose either Watford or Wembley Town Hall as a music studio, usually arriving before everybody else and wearing a kilt. He was delighted when I built him a monitor amplifier for his music sessions at a time when that kind of equipment was unavailable. I can see him now, sitting at his four-way RCA dubbing mixer, working on many of the Crown documentaries such as *Fires Were Started*, *Listen to Britain* and *Western Approaches*. Ken liked 'a wee dram' from time to time, and would often retire to his office - especially after a row. He did not suffer fools gladly, even if they were producers.

At the end of the war, when the Crown Film Unit was disbanded, he formed Anvil Films at Beaconsfield Studios and offered me a job, so I bought a house at High Wycombe to be near the studios. However, I eventually went to work at the new MGM Studios in Boreham Wood, and felt dreadful at letting Ken down, but we remained good friends and met up once in a while. Ken was extremely generous by nature and, wearing his kilt, hosted the legendary Anvil Christmas parties on the music stage at the former Denham Film Studios, whither the company had moved in its next phase. I last saw Ken just before I retired to Spain when he took me to lunch - at a Spanish restaurant. Sadly, we shall not see the likes of him again.

My first meeting with Ken Cameron was as a seventeen year old trying desperately to get in to the Film Industry. I was ushered into his office to behold this rather formidable gentleman wearing the kilt and surrounded by a cloud of smoke from his pipe; a sight all those who knew Ken will remember. He was one of the last Heads of Sound from an era that faded-in around the late thirties and faded-out somewhere during the mid seventies.

Ken was educated at Glasgow Academy and Glasgow University where he studied Electrical Engineering on the advice of two of his neighbours in Helensburgh, John Baird - pioneer of television, and Sir John Reith - boss of the BBC. It was after becoming a member of the University Film Society and meeting leading figures from the British Documentary movement including another Glasgow man the legendary John Grierson that the film bug really began to bite. By persuading John Grierson to take him on as a trainee in the GPO Film Unit at Blackheath and the University to accept such training as part of his degree course, all was in place for a career in the Film Industry.

This began in 1938 with the GPO Film Unit. War was in the offing and in August 1939 it was decided to make a film with the utmost speed. *If It Should Come*; a modest affair, instructed the British Public how to dig trenches and put on gas masks. The prints were ready for distribution by Sunday September 3rd but unfortunately by 11.00am war came and the film went back to Blackheath for re-shoots and re-recording. It was now to be called *Do It Now!*

In 1940 the GPO Film Unit was re-vamped, with Sidney Bernstein in overall charge, and later renamed the Crown Film Unit. One of the first films produced was *London Can Take It*, incorporating a sound track of the London Blitzkrieg recorded at Blackheath Studios with Ken in the basement and the microphone on the roof. It was one of the first recordings of the Blitz. Other famous films followed; *Target for Tonight*, *Coastal Command* and *Listen to Britain*, a cameo of Britain at war told entirely in sound.

With the war over, the CFU was rehoused at Beaconsfield Film Studios in 1946. Ken was charged with rebuilding the Sound Department. During the war, the building designated for it had been used as canteen and a fire had made the inside a shambles. A new Sound Department was built from scratch thus becoming one of the most up to date in the country.

Ken received the OBE in 1950. As he put it, "I can only assume that the Powers-that-Be had decided that a member of the Crown Film Unit should receive this honour and that some

blindfolded person had stuck a pin in my name".

In 1951 it was decided that Crown would be disbanded as an economy measure. With no other experience than in film, Ken created, with three other ex-Crown employees, Richard Warren, Ralph May and Ken Scrivener, Anvil Films.

Anvil was five years old when I climbed the narrow staircase to that smoky office in what was known as 'Cameron's Castle'.

Life was definitely different then. The Mixer was God and woe betide the Editor who presented untidy track sheets. They were flung across the studio and the unfortunate sound editor told to re-present them, preferably much improved. Juniors like myself were not allowed to wear ties tucked in behind a belt - they were unceremoniously flicked out; not allowed to lean against the wall, "Stand up straight" and had to do homework as set by Ken and then have it marked! We became expert at washing his sports car, a Sunbeam Talbot I seem to remember.

There was, of course, another side. In Summer, shorts were mandatory and a lull in work at the studio meant a trip to Burnham Beeches Swimming Pool for the whole department. This was the period of the Hammer House of Horror and the beginning of ITV; which of course was a big boost to the company.

Ken's great love was music but recording with more than one microphone was scorned - one placed the orchestra around the microphone. By the fifties, however it had crept up to six or so but, to quote Ken again, "there was certainly none of the nonsense of splitting the orchestra on to three tracks so that the balance could be corrected later".

The Beaconsfield era ended with the lease. Denham was the next home for Anvil. The lease was taken over from Pinewood Studios who only used the stage about once a month. It was time for another large investment but for Ken it was the end of recording. Ken Scrivener was now Anvil's Dubbing Mixer and Eric Tomlinson the Music Mixer. Ken complained that all he was allowed to do was sweep the floor and sign cheques but his enormous reputation in the industry ensured a whole stream of prestigious pictures coming to Denham for music recording, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Superman*, and *Star Wars*, to name but a few.

Ken retired in 1975 and married Bessie. This year would have been their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. He never lost interest in the company he called his baby. He could be testy but he was also very kind and a vastly knowledgeable man who disliked waste and pomposity. Those of us who had the privilege of working for him will remember him with fondness always.

The Art of **STAR WARS**

13 October 2000 - 29 April 2001



Whether you're a film lover, a *Star Wars* fan or just mad about art and design, *The Art of Star Wars* is a show you must not miss. More than 200 original objects from the archive of Lucasfilm unveil the artistic process behind the making of the legendary films.

Star Wars art is a treasure trove of details. The Art of Star Wars explores and celebrates the creative process behind the making of the legendary films.

The Art of Star Wars is a collection of original artwork, sketches, and models from the Star Wars franchise. It is a must-see for fans of the franchise and for anyone interested in the art of film-making.

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