SMPTE ALMANAC

By Michael Dolan

In this column we provide interesting historical briefs from Journal articles of days past. Its purpose is primarily entertainment, but we hope it will also stimulate your thinking and reflection on times past—how far we have come in the industry, as well as (sometimes) how some things never change. This is not meant to be an authoritative reference, and no attempt is made to correct any past errors or omissions of the Journal. We simply hope you enjoy the material.

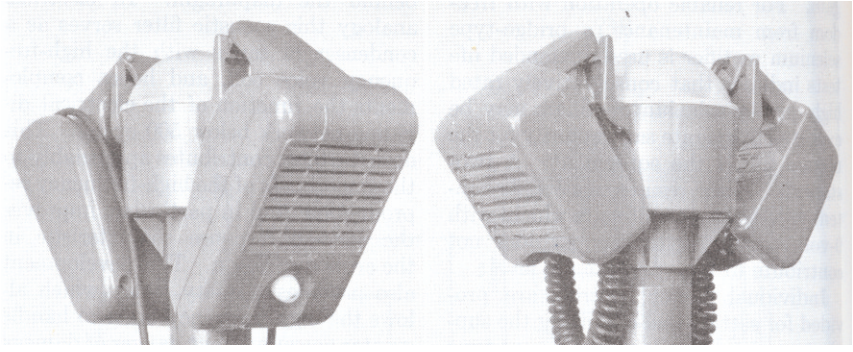
25 Years Ago in the Journal

The May 1976 issue contained a status report from the EBU…"the development of television broadcasting by the organizations participating in Eurovision program exchanges by terrestrial circuits was affected considerably by the economic recession during 1975…[but] three more organizations, all in North Africa, have introduced color television broadcasting in the past year…the RAI (Italy) has been authorized to introduce color in its two national networks…experimental color transmissions in Spain have become more numerous and it is reported that more than 100,000 PAL color receivers are now in use…First Network (TF1) in France introduced a limited color service in the autumn of 1975; because the original VHF monochrome transmission system using 819-line scanning must be retained as long as a significant number of receivers are unable to operate on 625 lines. The introduction of color in TF1 also meant that…all national television programs broadcast in Europe were available with a single video scanning standard—625 lines/frame, 50 fields/s…The most elaborate and memorable television programs distributed by Eurovision during 1975 were undoubtedly the coverage of the Apollo-Soyuz space flight…the experimental Symphonie satellite was used to relay television signals from the USSR to France.

"…ISO approved ISO 3640-1976, Cinematography—Motion Picture Prints and Sound Records for International Exchange of Television Programmes—Specifications developed by [SMPTE] Technical Committee 36."

50 Years Ago in the Journal

In the May 1951 article, "Theater Sound System," Passman and Ward reported on drive-in theater technology: "A ramp control cabinet is provided with all drive-in systems; each ramp is connected to the power amplifier through a switch so that the projectionist may immediately isolate a failure such as a short in the underground wiring. In-A-Car speakers…are available in two sizes…Both types have rugged die-cast housings finished in baked enamel and adequately weatherproofed. Straight or coiled cords are options. Volume control is by means of a rheostat…the coupling unit…contains a vacuum impregnated line transformer, [and] a 28-volt lamp…"



In-a-Car speaker equipment.

75 Years Ago in the Journal

The May 1926 issue had a report on Progress in the Motion Picture Industry. "This industry, like the radio and automobile fields, appears to be entering upon a period of improvements and refinements. Many new uses are being found for motion pictures. Generally these are of a utilitarian nature rather than for entertainment, but a most unique application is the use of pictures in the detection of election frauds…The voters' lists were photographed on motion picture film and projected onto a screen which was divided off into a number of sections. A staff of 300 addressers copied down the names and a return postcard was sent to each voter…18,000 were returned, marked by the post office "dead," "not known," "removed," etc…

…Contrasted with the recent successful efforts in this country to remove government tax on motion picture theatre tickets, municipalities in Poland…tax in some cases amounts to as high as 50% total receipts."