



AROUND THE WORLD IN NINE WEEKS

TOWARDS the end of 1955 I had completed my sketch plans for the proposed Air Terminal building at the Christchurch International Airport, and also was to work out sketch plans for the reconstruction for the new Broadcasting House in Christchurch, a building that will absorb the present 3YA, provide further accommodation for 3YA and 3YC, and will also bring in 3ZB—all three under one roof. Apart from wishing to put the edge on Harewood I needed to learn a great deal about radio architecture (sound broadcasting—not TV), so I decided to fly to some of the main world centres, taking nine weeks only. The story of flying more or less continuously, the beauties and the traps of this procedure, is too long

to tell here. It will be radio architecture that I will write of now.

I had planned the trip very carefully and was to visit European centres first, then British, and last American. When I had made my visits there was no doubt for me about the order of merit. In airport architecture all countries had wonderful work, but in radio work it can be summed up thus. The European centres at Cologne, Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Oslo were outstanding. The British centres of London and Glasgow were dull. The American centres of New York and Los Angeles were similar, Wichita in Kansas was an exception. In America sound broadcasting is the poor relation of TV, and whereas on the Continent there is intense civic pride in radio buildings, in England and America it does not seem that way.

The Cologne Radio House, recently completed, is close to the Dom or Cathedral; and both are places of pilgrimage. The Radio House, its interiors full of grace and good taste, is almost perfect. I understand that British and American funds were available. Guided tours come from far and near for the Germans to see their Radio House, which they regard as a centre of culture; and that is what a radio house should be. In addition it had a fine concert hall. The main radio houses about Amsterdam are situated in Hilversum. The A.V.R.O. is the most notable. I saw it under snow, which did not diminish its effect.

Copenhagen was also a cultural centre. As with Oslo, the buildings were the work of great architects; planning detail and finish had a timeless quality, their proportions and design were so good.

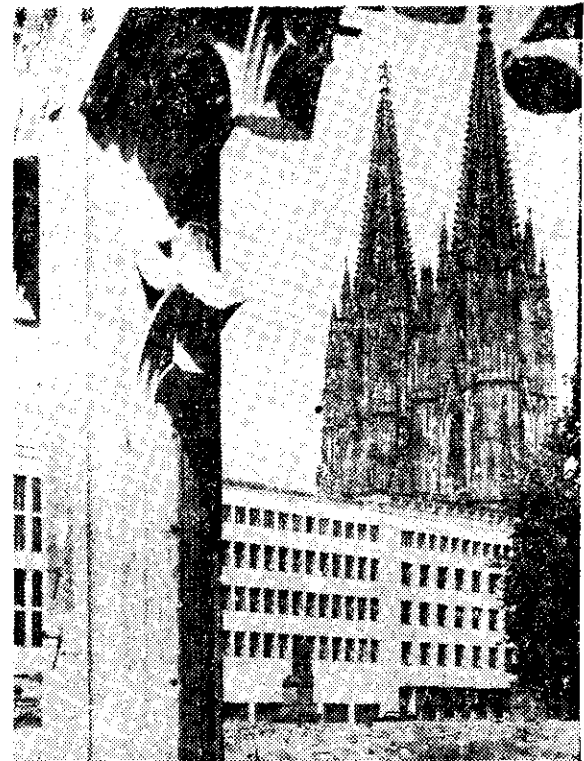
by Paul Pascoe

In England the BBC in London is probably technically very good, but the architecture does not deserve description. Some of the subsidiary studios, scattered around London, have some interest; but they really do reflect what is sometimes called British compromise. The truth must be that, whereas on the Continent there are radio counterparts of the London Festival Hall on the South Bank, in England there are not. The London Festival Hall must come into the list, since it is used for broadcasting concerts; the interior in particular is an achievement of all that is best in contemporary architecture, and shows what English architects can do.

In America the position appears similar to England. Wichita, Kansas, had a new station which was worth attention, and there would be other small ones also that I would not have seen.

In air terminal design I found definite conclusions on ways and means of achieving the best; in broadcasting architecture it was the reverse.

From the contradictory views of real experts, European, British and American, acoustics is either a young science or an art as well as a science, probably the former.



★ RADIO HOUSE, Cologne, with the spires of the Cathedral in the background. TOP OF PAGE: Channel 10, KAKE-TV, Wichita, Kansas



GRACE and good taste—an interior shot of Radio House, Cologne