

The British Radio Olympia

The Latest in Radio



THE sixth, and by far the most interesting and comprehensive, radio exhibition in England was held recently at Olympia. "If it's Radio, it's Olympia," was one of the snappy slogans used by the English Radio Manufacturers' Association, and from all accounts it is evident that, for once a slogan can be tabloid truth. As year by year the Radio Exhibitions succeeded one another, it is noticeable that each exhibition has some outstanding feature which perhaps may be termed a phase in development. For example, last year might well have been known as a screen-grid valve year, and the show preceding that undoubtedly served to emphasise the popularity of the moving coil loud-speaker.

It now seems evident that the modern trend in design of broadcast receiving apparatus is "all electric" sets. Next in order of importance comes the portable set, the design and performance of which have been improved immensely since last year's exhibition.

Features of Olympia.

Throughout the entire exhibition, a carefully toned colour scheme in blue and gold was employed. Twenty-five small theatres were housed under the Olympia roof, each sound-proofed from the others. These halls were for the purposes of receiving set demonstration, and it is the first time that such facilities providing for individual demonstrations, without fear of interference, have been available. To supply these halls, a specially constructed receiver and amplifier was installed, by means of which programmes were received and passed to each of the miniature theatres.

The main feature of the B.B.C. exhibit this year comprised a model

THE Mecca of English radio enthusiasts, for six years, has been the annual exhibition at Olympia. Each successive year sees new developments and these are invariably foreshadowed at Olympia. The greatest of exhibitions has just concluded and it has revealed the simple A.C. receiver, the dynamic speaker, and the portable.

diorama depicting the course taken by a typical programme from the microphone to the receiving aerial of the distant listener. A model of the latest type of broadcasting studio was also exhibited.

Considerable interest was taken in the demonstrations of radiovision which took place in a small building adjoining Olympia. The visitor was enabled to see, not only the radiovised images on the screen of the cabinet, but also the transmitter at work and the studio in which the radiovised performances were given. The transmitted pictures are reported to have been much clearer and larger than they were on the occasion of last year's exhibition.

The main characteristics of this year's exhibition at Olympia were the "all-electric" or mains operated receivers and both the electric and combined radio gramophones. In the case of the former, it is noticeable that not only that more firms are producing this class of set, but the models shown range from the modest but highly efficient two-valve set to the more luxurious five-valve sets, the prices being surprisingly reasonable. Screen-grid valves are employed in practically all of the modern multi-valve sets, with, in some cases, a choice of super-power or pentode valve in the output stage. Many eliminators that will enable less

up-to-date receivers to work from the electric supply mains were displayed.

The humble crystal set, once so popular, has now almost disappeared in England, and only one firm exhibited this type of receiver.

Among the more novel features displayed was a set which could be carried about in a car, and operated from the dash-board. Another was worked by a dial resembling that of an automatic telephone. The required number is dialed, and, it is claimed, the station connected to it is heard.

On the whole the general tendency in present-day receiver manufacture in England is towards fewer valves and more efficient sets. The almost complete absence of American-manufactured receivers at the exhibition was noticeable. This is probably because these sets are not adaptable to the conditions of wide wave-range which exist in England. Also, for the same reason, the one-dial controlled sets are not yet so popular in England.

Gram-Radio and Portables.

ANOTHER marked development of the year has been the extension of radio gramophones and the perfecting of internal appliances and simplification of control. Combined radio-gramophone sets which are operated entirely from the mains, were displayed by many exhibitors. Considerable improvement was noticeable in the design and construction of the "pick-up" and tone arm. It is reported that several ingenious devices took the place of the old familiar tone-arm in the various instruments on view.

Probably the greatest development shown by the radio industry this year is in regard to portables, nearly two hundred types of which were shown. Four-valve sets appeared to be in the majority, the circuit including one, and occasionally two, screen-grid valves with a pentode in the output stage.

On their first introduction these sets were designed chiefly for outdoor use, and were put up in large-sized dispatch cases, but as they have become even more popular in the home the manufacturers are providing them with wooden cabinets, which, as well as being light enough to carry, have a very handsome appearance.

Many of these sets are entirely mains-operated, and as such are known as transportables. This type of receiver, which is completely self-contained, appears to be increasingly popular in England. Despite the fact that only a frame antenna is used, the efficiency of modern valves and circuits results in a very satisfactory range of reception.

Loudspeakers.

THIS year, as never before, the loudspeakers have come into their own, and many and varied models were on display. The types exhibited included moving-coil speakers, shown in chassis form and mounted both on baffle-boards and in cabinets; ordinary cone instruments in various mountings and driven by various types of reed and balanced armature units; linen diaphragm loudspeakers of all dimensions also actuated by a variety of drive units, and several examples of exponential horn speakers. With a few exceptions, it seems as though the old horn-type speaker has disappeared. One company exhibits as one of its novelties a new moving-coil loudspeaker which is said to give an improved balance to tone and a greater sensitivity.

While it is certainly true that each succeeding year sees a greater proportion of the exhibits clearly intended to interest the non-technical listener, there was, nevertheless, much exhibited at Olympia to appeal to the home-constructor. The "kit" idea, which involves the supply of all the necessary components, is rapidly growing in favour among manufacturers, and the plan has been extended to include various types of loudspeakers and power-supply units.

The conversion of an ordinary gramophone to an electric-reproduction model or the combining of gramophone mechanism with a wireless receiving set also offers great scope to the enthusiastic home-constructor. The components required, such as the pick-up and carrier, the electrically-driven turntable, moving-coil loudspeaker parts, etc., were all exhibited in variety. Other set-building components, such as condensers, transformers, chokes, coils, etc., were displayed in profusion. One point worthy of special mention is the gradually increasing number of American manufactured components which are finding their way on to the English market. Notable among these are amplifying units and moving-coil loudspeakers.

THAT this exhibition was a complete success, both as regards radio development and popularity, is exemplified by the record crowds which attended Olympia. Within fifteen minutes of the opening of the exhibition, over 1000 people had passed through the turnstiles. It is interesting to conjecture what new improvements future Olympic exhibitions will bring forth, especially as it seems apparent that an end in the progress of radio development, especially as regards reproduction, is in sight.

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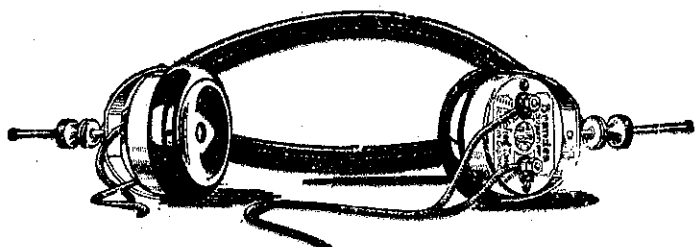
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