

AROUND AND BEHIND THE DIALS

PUBLIC TELEVISION DISPLAY AT 1938 RADIOLYMPIA

THE Thirteenth National Radio Exhibition—popularly known throughout the United Kingdom by the name "Radiolympia"—organised by the Radio Manufacturers' Association, was held at Olympia from August 24 to September 3 this year.

Exhibitors numbered some 140 firms, including 20 piano manufacturers in a special piano section, incorporated in the exhibition for the first time. Of the 120 exhibitors more directly concerned in the radio industry, some 35 were set manufacturers, 50 component makers, 10 wholesalers, half a dozen publishing firms, a dozen raw material suppliers, and a dozen or so makers of measuring instruments and service equipment.

The public attendance numbered approximately 145,000.

The outstanding features of Radiolympia 1938 were undoubtedly occasioned by radical changes in policy which were applied by the association in this year's organisation for the first time. Those changes affected two aspects of the Exhibition. First, the Radiolympia Theatre, in which for many years past performances have been given by favourite radio artists, was discontinued and a television studio substituted for it. Secondly, technical facilities were provided which made possible demonstrations of radio receivers and, also, television receivers on the stands of exhibitors throughout the Exhibition.

The television studio was conceived and carried out in intimate rather than spectacular fashion, aiming to show the type of home entertainment and the method of its presentation which is regularly provided in the television transmissions from Alexandra Palace.

As a result, the crowds who thronged previous exhibitions to see the spectacular variety show given in the Radiolympia Theatre were, this year, absent—an explanation, in part, at any rate, of the slight fall in attendances during the exhibition period.

Visitors' Interest

In the absence of these visitors, a marked change in the atmosphere of the Exhibition was to be observed. The superficial gaiety and glitter was replaced by a real sense of interest in the goods displayed by the exhibitors. Evidence of this was readily afforded by a visit to the gallery, whence a view of the Exhibition, as a whole, was to be obtained. It was most noticeable that the crowds were on the exhibitors' stands in close contact alike with goods and salesman, rather than gazing from the gangways.

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This effect was doubtless due, in large measure, to the arrangement whereby television demonstrations were given on stands throughout the Exhibition rather than in segregated darkened rooms as in previous Exhibitions. Realisation that television is now a definitely established home entertainment within the television service area was surely conveyed to every visitor.

The arrangement of the radio-frequency sound demonstration system also helped to achieve this intimate result, for controllable receivers operating on special "local" or "distant" Radiolympia transmissions were, in general, situated inside the stands so that they should only be operated under the exhibitors' supervision and so prevent interference of one set with another.

R.F. Demonstrations

The radio-frequency demonstration system merits further description. The idea was conceived a year ago by the Radio Manufacturers' Association and an actual experiment on a small scale was carried out in exhibition conditions at the 1937 Radiolympia. This experiment was so successful that it was determined to rely upon the system entirely for the whole of the 1938 demonstrations.

Two special transmitters were provided, their programmes being distributed to the stands in the Exhibition by the recently developed system of co-axial cables. The stands themselves were equipped with circuits which caused the distributed programmes to duplicate the signals picked up by an average receiving aerial.

The two transmissions were: Radiolympia Local on approximately 375 metres (800 kilocycles), a high-fidelity transmission of about 20 millivolts intensity, which simulated the reception of a local BBC station. The other transmission available for sound-broadcast receivers was Radiolympia Distant, on approximately 335 metres (895 kilocycles) which was of lower intensity (approximately two millivolts). Visitors were able to use this transmission to judge the selectivity of the receivers.

Television

As already stated, it was found possible at the Exhibition for the first time to demonstrate television receivers on the stands in the main exhibition, so that visitors could examine them with the minimum of difficulty and formality. The Radiolympia television transmissions were extended beyond the normal BBC television transmission times and visitors were able

to see televisions working at practically any time during the hours of the exhibition.

These transmissions were picked up from Alexandra Palace by an aerial on the roof of Olympia, and distributed to the exhibitors' stands by means of apparatus such as is used for community aerial operation, in blocks of flats, etc.

The quality of the demonstrations was uniformly high. The pictures received were bright, clear, with good tone gradation, and free from flicker. They showed substantial improvement on the standard of 1937, at a very reasonable price level.

Part of the programmes originated in the Alexandra Palace studios; part were sports outside broadcasts including the final stages of the last Test Match at the Oval, transmitted to Alexandra Palace by ultra-shortwave radio link. Another part, of particular interest to visitors, originated in the Radiolympia television studio. Here visitors were able to see the programmes direct, to see the BBC apparatus and studio equipment, and then to see the programme as transmitted via a special television cable to Alexandra Palace, whence it was radiated to viewers in Olympia and outside. A small television transmitter was provided in Olympia to serve as a stand-by, allowing the Radiolympia studio programmes to be distributed direct to the Exhibition, instead of via the cable to Alexandra Palace, and then by radio back again to Olympia. This provision was made to take care of contingencies which might otherwise interrupt the demonstration of the television receivers.

Broadcast Receivers

Turning to radio broadcast receivers, while sound design and good workmanship were as marked as ever, the most spectacular of the improvements made during the year certainly had to do with tuning. This has been made—almost magically—an automatic process. Simply by pressing one of a number of buttons, or by dialling a number (as with an automatic telephone), the desired station is tuned in. Simple devices were also provided whereby the station selected by the individual push buttons could be changed, very simply, at will.

The variety of receivers with automatic tuning displayed in the exhibition was extremely wide. From the region of 2 guineas right up to 150 guineas it was possible to progress from a simple telephone dial set to the other extreme of an automatic record-changing push-button radiogramophone with a remote control panel of push-buttons that could be operated from an armchair, yards away from the instrument itself.

Whilst automatic tuning was the most spectacular new feature, United Kingdom manufacturers have worked as hard, and as successfully, on many other aspects. Particularly is this true in regard to shortwave listening. The latest sets have continued the progress of recent years in this direction. In these modern sets the old bugbears of "fading" and "atmospherics" have been largely overcome. Quality reception and faithful reproduction are other outstanding features of the products of the United Kingdom radio industry.

Eliminating Interference

These developments in television and shortwave reception have carried with them close study of the problems of interference. United Kingdom manufacturers have devoted much research to this matter and have developed a range of anti-interfer-

ence devices, including special type aerials, and equipment for use both at the receiving end and also at the interfering source. This is a matter which assumes more and more importance as radio reception increases in popularity.

The question of tropical use raises a problem to which special consideration has been given and many United Kingdom firms are producing receivers specially designed and finished to meet tropical conditions.

Whilst the United Kingdom set is now suitable in type for use in any quarter, that does not mean that the particular requirements of individual markets do not receive consideration. Many manufacturers make a point of producing special models to suit particular overseas markets, such special models being variants of the standard types which can now be made quite quickly and at little extra expense.

International Valves

To a considerable extent the development and use of the "International Valve" by United Kingdom manufacturers has assisted in the progress of recent years. By the use of these valves, United Kingdom manufacturers

are able to supply such sets that service problems are simplified and testing equipment already existing in overseas markets will be useful for United Kingdom made receivers also.

For those markets where sets making use of valves of the old standard United Kingdom type are still favoured, these will be continued by the manufacturers and no difficulty in the supply of these types is likely to be experienced.

Export Committee

The United Kingdom manufacturers, as a whole, are now taking a much greater interest in overseas markets than they have ever done before. An export committee has this year been appointed by the Radio Manufacturers' Association. This committee is working in close touch with the Department of Overseas Trade and steps have been taken to obtain the fullest information concerning conditions in the various markets throughout the world which are likely to present an opportunity for the sale of sets and component parts of United Kingdom manufacture. Careful study is being and will continue to be given to these reports and definite and progressive increase in United Kingdom overseas radio trade should result.



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