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MCI

MCI At 25: A Pioneer Spirit In Studio Equipment Earns Global Respect

President G.C. "Jeep" Harned (at right) evaluates a new JH-110 recorder transport in the final test area with George Kuchmas, manager of tape machine check-out.



MCI: Not just another alphabet soup electronics company. Consider. The firm has exploded into a world leader in the development, manufacture and marketing of professional recording consoles and multi-track tape recorders. In fact, it is the only and largest pro audio firm specializing in the two prime pieces of recording studio equipment.

The firm helped pioneer 24-track recording in the late 1960s. It introduced a 32-track, three-inch analog tape machine. Its JH 6000 Series is the recording industry's first automation ready, in-line production recording console.

Along the way MCI has developed such intriguing studio technology as the AutoLocator—an optional accessory product for MCI multi-track tape recorders which enables the operator to find any position on the tape; JH 50 automation; Plasma Display for consoles which replaces the conventional VU peak and DC meters; and the AutoLock, a micro-processor based SMPTE/EBU generator/reader/synchronizer for all MCI tape machines enabling audio, video, and film interface.

Recently EMI Ltd. the giant worldwide music company based in London, entered into an agreement with MCI to attack the digital horizon. EMI will provide research and circuitry while MCI will build and market under the MCI logo digital mastering machines. Later, digital multi-tracks, editors and consoles.

Not long ago MCI had revenues of several million dollars. In 1980 revenues should be well over \$20 million. Growth has been particularly explosive in the last few years.

MCI can take credit for the proliferation and the explosion of the world recording studio market. Its affordable but professional "work-horse" electronics enabled many studio entrepreneurs to get into business.

All this from a small hi-fi retailing operation begun some 25 years ago by G.C. "Jeep" Harned and wife Joyce (who is secretary/treasurer of MCI today and plays a key role in the firm. Product names begin with her initials—JH) in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. The story is Horatio Alger-

like.

"We opened as a hi-fi shop in 1955," Harned, president of MCI, remembers. "The first dealer in the state of Florida for such lines as Acoustic Research, KLH, Altec-Lansing. We even had a few JBLs back in those days. But we were unsuccessful as a retailer."

"I was just a kid out of college with a civil engineering degree. In 1965, 10 years later, the company's net worth was minus \$10,000. My yearly income was probably less than \$3,000. And I left a job with an oil company in 1955 where I was making \$12,000 as a doodlebugger."

"But I think those 10 years of starving to death were very valuable as far as getting the savvy of operating and surviving were concerned. Without that I don't think I could have become a good businessman. I think a lot of the systems that we have going in the company, like the marketing set up and so on, came from those days of learning."

Always a hi-fi enthusiast, Harned's Music Centers, Inc., enabled him to get more than marketing and operational experience. It enabled him to play an active and learning role in the then developing hi-fi industry and its electronics. It gave him an entrée to the then also expanding world of professional recording.

Local studio entrepreneurs such as a Mack Emerman of Criteria, would enlist his aid to improve the then existing record electronics they were using.

"That's really how it started," Harned says. "Other people would hear about the console I may have worked on or tape machine and would come around. In those days there wasn't any advertising, just word of mouth. We were all going through the learning process. That's when the industry was being developed."

Harned began building custom recording consoles for different people and thus MCI, as a professional audio firm, was born.

At the beginning of the pro side, the firm made available low priced recording equipment.

Says Harned: "When we started we brought out a low price line of multi-tracks and consoles. Multi-tracks for \$16,500 and consoles for \$18,000. So for \$35,000 a guy could get into business. The cost of both of those pieces of equipment was just a little bit more than the multi-tracks Ampex and 3M were selling in those days. That was around 1970."

"Up until that time," he continues, "sales volume was so low for pro audio firms that they worked on finder's fees and that sort of thing. It wasn't practical to develop any kind of sales organization. Our sales volume began to grow when we brought out this stuff at these ridiculously low prices. Our sales backlog went to 50 pieces overnight, which was three times what the other two manufacturers, Ampex and 3M, sold in the previous two years. It indicated to us that there was a huge market out there that was largely unexplored."

(Continued on page MCI-5)



MCI's new headquarters, just purchased from STP, measure 156,000 square feet on 24 acres.



From the complex wiring of multi-track consoles (top) to the details of engraving the buttons, all is done under the roof of MCI headquarters.

Financial matters are discussed by (from left) Paul Ullman, director of administration and finance; Joyce Harned, secretary/treasurer, and Vipin Sahgal, financial consultant.



Twenty-five years ago when Jeep Harned wandered into Mack Emerman's struggling Criteria Recording Studios in North Miami, neither of them realized it was one of those funny little quirks of fate, forever intriguing with endless "what if" possibilities. What if Jeep hadn't chucked his hi-fi shop in high disgust, asking only \$50 for the entire inventory? What if Mack hadn't thwarted his father's plans for him to manufacture salt water taffy in Hialeah? What if Jeep hadn't noticed that Mack's studio was producing some pretty weird sounds from some pretty sad equipment? And what if the two of them had simply gone their separate ways? Today, Criteria would not be one of the world's leading

independent recording studios and MCI would not be one of the foremost manufacturers of professional recording equipment. It was a relationship, in those early days, built on mutual trust. It's still the same today. After all, Mack and Jeep grew up together.

“We Grew Up Together”



Jeep at six.



Mack at four.



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MCI



Cat Stevens, center, visits the MCI console checkout room where Wally Watkins, left, and Jeep Harned demonstrate the advantages of MCI's Plasma Display meters.

Moines . . . in Springfield, Ill. . . . In St. Louis . . . places that never dreamed of having a professional recording studio.

"Scully almost did it with their 100s but they missed because they left out some basic ingredients like the third head and a set of VU meters. I think we can take credit for the explosion of recording studios. It may have happened sooner or later but we helped it happen."

Did MCI realize at the time that it was developing into a co-specialist with both tape recorders and mixing consoles?

"We felt," says Harned, "that there was a lot of strength in having the two major pieces of capital equipment that a guy invested in a recording studio under one manufacturer's control. And being able to hand these to a dealer and let the dealer sell a turnkey job for a recording studio with our equipment."

"If there was a problem between the tape machine and the console, with either one or both, the owner could go to one person, namely us, or our dealer. For example, sometimes the interface between a board from one manufacturer and a tape machine from another gets into trouble."

Adds Lutz Meyer, MCI vice president of marketing: "There's another factor. When you make two major pieces of recording studio equipment, you can place certain functions where

they really belong and not try to assume or presume something else will place it here or there."

The co-development of multi-tracks and consoles has given MCI a unique vanguard position technology-wise in the evolution of recording studios. Harned is not immodest when he states: "I think all our stuff has been noted for very clean analog production. I think some 10 or 15 years ago I was known to be able to write as much out of a circuit as anybody in the world. Our early tape machines, for example, had constant tape tension with unique circuitry. For the first time in the industry you had a machine that you could play music at the head of the tape and at the tails of the tape and the timing was the same."

MCI's contemporaries would attest to the contributions the firm has made to the industry.

How did MCI evolve into the design and manufacture of consoles?

Recalls Harned: "We were establishing dealerships around the U.S. in the early 1970s and we didn't have anyone in Nashville. Dave Harrison, who now heads a very successful console firm of his own, became our dealer there with a company called Studio Supply. Actually, before he became our dealer for tape machines he suggested to me that MCI expand its line with consoles. I said 'why not?'"

"Perhaps I shouldn't have said that since we had our hands full making tape machines. But Harrison had an idea for a console and indicated he wanted to work out a royalty arrangement whereby he would design the console and we would build and sell it. He had certain design ideas and I finally decided to go ahead and build six boards and give it a try. He handed me a set of drawings. It was very difficult building those first boards but we sold the six we built."

"After that there was a lot of thought given to design concept and we re-did a lot of things. That's when the JH-416 became a reality and we began building and shipping a couple a week."

One factor contributing to MCI developments has been an organic interchange among the firm and end users.

Typical of that is the evolution of the AutoLocator, an "optional accessory" device for MCI tape machines that gives the operator the ability to associate a numerical address to where information is stored on the recording tape. It can accurately locate any tape position in either forward or reverse direction.

"We had our tape transport system finished around 1970," says Harned, "and we were demonstrating it to Mack Emerman of Criteria Recording Studios. After we finished showing him the logic system he said 'that's great . . . but if you guys could only make this thing wind back to a certain point when you're overdubbing.' Mack dropped that!"

"Jim Strickland, my chief engineer at the time, and I looked at each other and I asked him: 'Jim, can you do a thing that will

(Continued on page MCI-25)

The Pasha Music House in Los Angeles demonstrates a fully MCI-equipped studio, with the JH528 console, JH110 and JH24 tape machines.



MCI's customer service engineers work in-house as well as being available for installation and trouble shooting anywhere in the world.



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Hi Fi Shop Evolves Into Worldwide Pro Of Pro Sound

In 1955, G.C. "Jeep" Harned and wife Joyce opened a hi-fi shop in Fort Lauderdale with \$8,500 borrowed money.

"It was three years before we took home our first paycheck," recalls Harned. "We struggled with Music Centers, Inc., for two years before moving to Sunrise

Bldg. We even changed the name of our business to MCI, Inc., simply enough in 1964. We were tired of getting calls from people who wanted theatre tickets and guitar strings."

While the retail business was slow, Harned, a graduate civil engineer, was repairing stereo components.

He also picked up some work installing commercial sound systems with clients like the Parker Playhouse, Pirate's Worlds and Fort Lauderdale International Airport. From time to time he would work on sound systems in the neighboring Caribbean.

Finally, after struggling with their retail outlet for a decade, the Harneds, tired of starving and occasional store robberies, put a sign in front of their operation and asked \$50 for everything, lock, stock and barrel.

"We just plain wanted out," says Harned. "We had been knocking ourselves out for 10 years and had a net worth of less than \$1,000. We also had quite a number of debts. I wrote to our creditors and told them they would just have to be patient."

A turning point came in 1959. Harned got together with Mack Emerman, himself struggling in North Miami to get a fledgling recording studio business called Criteria off the ground.

"You wouldn't believe some of the sounds coming out of Mack's place then," recalls Harned.

Today Criteria is one of the largest, independent recording studio operations in the world with sites on both the East and West coasts. It is completely equipped with MCI recording consoles and multi-track tape machines.

"The equipment Mack was recording on back then was not at all in good shape," states Harned. "I spent endless hours repairing, rebuilding and replacing equipment in Mack's studio. Heaven knows where we would both be if we hadn't found each other then."

The relationship with Emerman began the first of long standing business and friendship links with the studio owners around the world—Harned believes the mutual trust between MCI and studio operations has been a cornerstone of MCI growth.

MCI was taking a new direction. Harned had been in the service business and had taken advantage of his technical knowledge to build consoles that would last, operate efficiently and were easy to service when necessary.

Down time, when equipment is not working, is costly to studio owners. You have to build products that have very little down time. One way to minimize it is to build products that can be serviced quickly and efficiently when necessary," Harned explains.

In 1964, Bob Richardson decided to open a recording studio in Atlanta called Master Sound Studios with Harned designing and building the custom console.

"Mack Emerman referred Harned to me," says Richardson, "and spoke so highly of him I never really considered letting anyone else do the work. I trusted Jeep instinctively."

Harned built other small mixing consoles for customers in Jackson, Miss.

"We negotiated a \$1,000 deal for nearly two months," Harned recalls. "The first couple of real hits to come out of the deep South were mixed on those boards."

"In the mid sixties," he continues, "Atlantic Records approached me

and I built custom consoles for them as well. I even afforded myself the luxury of a couple of assistants by that time."

MCI was on its way.

"It was really a natural development," says Lutz Meyer, vice president of marketing for MCI and a long time friend and associate of Harned.

"Jeep has the unique ability to see the essence of a problem and swiftly propose a viable solution. This quality is an integral part of MCI's success. It introduces a tremendous degree of the human element into the design and manufacture of our products."

With designs for custom consoles increasing, Harned abandoned his commercial sound enterprise and rented a 10,000 square-foot building on Flagler Drive. He began hiring employees.

"Our philosophy has always been to manufacture consoles and recorders of the highest calibre and make them available to studio owners at a price they can afford," explains Harned.

One industry observer states: "If MCI hadn't come along with their line, many of today's studios just wouldn't be in business. For \$40,000-\$50,000 you could go into the recording business. That was unheard of. MCI came up with state-of-the-art product at half the price of the competition's."

MCI's domestic business began to grow rapidly and Harned decided to tap another market.

"We went to the APRS show in London," he recalls. "Our

An early shot of Jeep Harned, testing and helping to build some of the first consoles at MCI.



These early hi-fi speakers bear the J. Harned - designed signature. Harned began as Music Centers, Inc., 25 years ago, concentrating on the then-infant high fidelity industry.



MCI's current headquarters, which will be retained for the sheet metal and machine shops when the rest of MCI consolidates in the new building in February of 1980.

Joyce and Jeep Harned and G.E. Griffin, right, executive vice president, go over the floor plans of MCI's new headquarters building.

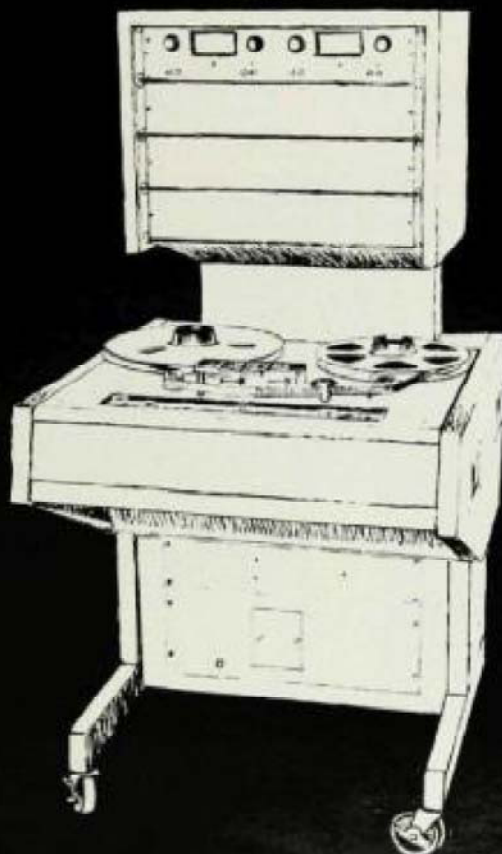


Nowadays, Harned usually spends the first half of his day in his office taking care of MCI administration, and the second half in and around engineering, where he is often inclined to get directly involved.



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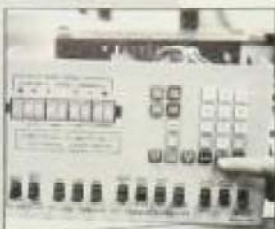
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TO SHARING IN YOUR SUCCESS FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT 25!*



Marketing Innovations Equal Technological Breakthroughs

MCI's AutoLock system and AutoLocator. The AutoLocator technically sophisticated but conservatively priced, was a coup in marketing strategy.

John Shepherd, manager, customer service. All of MCI's dealers must attend their training school once a year.



MCI has flowered into a \$20 million plus a year firm from as much as being a technology innovator as a marketing innovator.

G.C. "Jeep" Harned explains MCI's marketing philosophy: "MCI is more of an R&D and engineering type of firm. We actually have no sales effort from MCI but rather through our dealers. And this has been copied by other pro audio firms."

"We put the burden on the local guy," he continues, "to establish the contact, make the sale, installation... usually it's a turnkey type of thing. We put the burden on him for in-service warranty and consequently we train those guys. We require that they come in here and attend school once a year, whenever there's some new product that we have to worry about."

They are service people as well. That's one of the dealership requirements, that they send people into our school which we maintain in Fort Lauderdale.

"We can control the dealer network from here. Actually, it's a kind of refereeing that goes on."

Commenting on MCI's U.S. domestic dealer structure, Harned says: "We will only appoint a limited amount of dealers which have proven they are capable of being extraordinary. And extraordinary in several areas. They must have the connections and skills in the industry of being recognized as a serious and trustworthy partner."

"And they must maintain that service requirement because MCI has never given a warranty to anyone other than through a dealer. The labor portion of the warranty, which is not given by all manufacturers, is given through the dealer and of course the dealer is compensated for that at the moment of the initial sale. Therefore, the incentive on his end is there to serve the customer."

"Part of our philosophy, though," he continues, "is to discourage sales activity in an area where you cannot provide 24 to 48 hour service. It's not necessary to have the dealer around the corner from the customer but you need a dealer, as well as a manufacturer, who can back up and service product. I think that fact that our dealers are bringing in more orders than we can produce product for right now attests to the solid nature of our dealer setup."

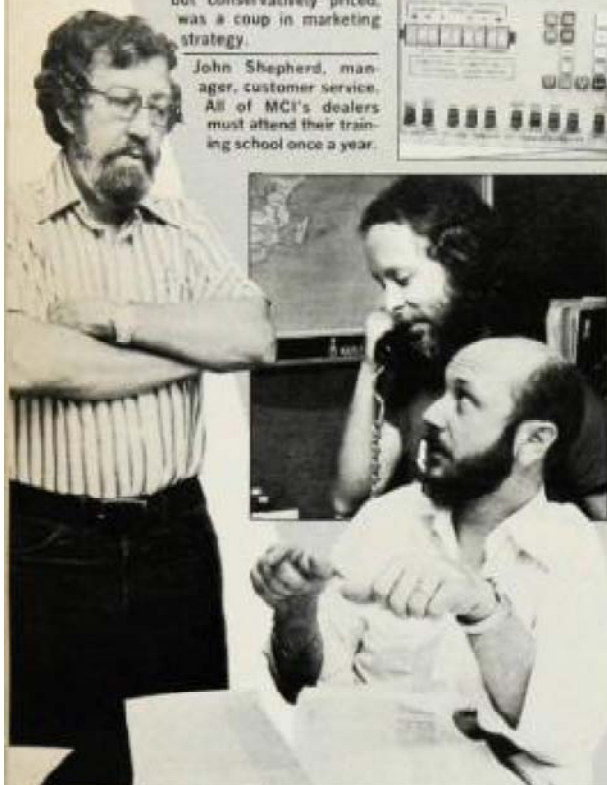
Harned maintains that MCI's explosive growth over the last few years has been an equation of marketing, products and one other factor.

"I think," he observes, "that good business sense keeps you there as well. If you make dumb decisions even though you make a good product... and I've seen it happen many times... you hurt yourself and your products' sales go down. I think it's just the attention to detail in every aspect of this business that has kept us successful."

"We also try to give the user what he wants and not build something and say 'this is what you want.' I really resent somebody telling me that they already know what I want."

One interesting example of Harned's marketing vision that underscores the subtleties of the entire MCI operation is the marketing of the AutoLocator, MCI's "optional accessory" for its tape transport system that locates where information is stored on a tape.

(Continued on page MCI-14)



Harned and vice president of marketing, Lutz Meyer go over gauges for an issue of MCI's News and Views.

Mack Emerman, owner of Criteria Studios, seated right, shakes hands with Lutz Meyer, finalizing an order for MCI equipment. Bee Gees' co-producer Karl Richardson is seated at left.

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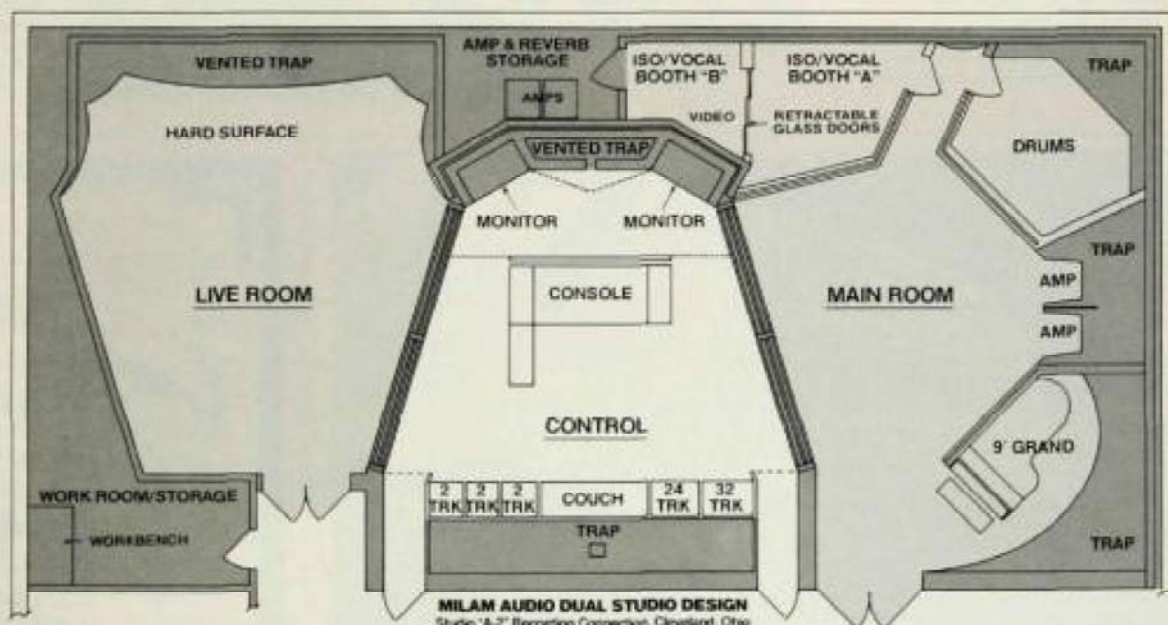
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MCI's international business has mushroomed in the past several years and extends now into more than 30 countries worldwide.

MCI dealers abroad are located in Canada (Vancouver, Ontario, Toronto, and Quebec, St. Laurent), Mexico; the West Indies and Caribbean; South and Central America (Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Bogota, and Lima); Europe (Ditbeek, Belgium; London; Paris; Hamburg; Endhoven, Holland; Milano, Italy; Barcelona, Spain; and Göteborg, Sweden; Johannesburg, South Africa; Victoria and South Melbourne, Australia; Wellington, New Zealand; and in Asia (Tokyo, Seoul, Korea; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Manadabayong, Philippines; and Taipei, Taiwan).

"While our international business has surged," observes Lutz Meyer, MCI vice president of marketing, "it would be dangerous to neglect the U.S. market because everyone knows that market has the number one potential and that potential is at least equal to more than one-half."

A few years ago MCI's business was something like 19% export and the balance domestic. Then in the following three years it changed into a ratio between 40% to 45% export and 55% to 60% domestic."

Meyer terms that a healthy ratio.

"It's a sensible ratio also," he says. "The domestic market needs to dominate and MCI will never forget the importance of the domestic market. It may sound arrogant but it's a clean-cut, absolute fact that the technology improvements in the world have originated in the U.S. Los Angeles and New York have been super strongholds for ingenuity, for various reasons, and that applies to our industries."

"Los Angeles is the world's capital for movies and music and that spins off a lot of newer technology. New York has always had great and tremendous potential in the commercial field and a lot of spinoffs come from there. Those markets say 'you better listen and be aware.' You better be a part of it."

"As far as domestic versus foreign sales go, I would like to be able to achieve an increase in both areas in an equal level but maintain the balance between them. MCI came from the



At the grand opening of New York's MCI-equipped Soundmixers Studio are Ham Brosious, right, president of Audio Techniques and Harry Hirsch, Soundmixers president.



Gus Dudgeon's Moonlight Studio, under construction 25 miles from London.



The reach of MCI equipment is truly international. Fritz Ehrentauf's Ibiza Sound Studios on the Spanish island in the Mediterranean is MCI-equipped.



In the U.S., MCI equipment can be found nationwide, at, for example, the Muscle Shoals Sound Studios. Picture are owners (and "rhythm section") from left, David Hood, Roger Hawkins, Jimmy Johnson and Barry Beckett.

U.S. market. Therefore the interest, inputs and ingenuity from it need to be maintained."

MCI is even eyeing China, which is finally emerging. "We have been looking at that market," states Meyer, "for some time. It is obviously a very dominant third or fourth market area in the world and it is by no means a market area which anyone should overlook."

Meyer, who at one time spent four years living in South America as a manufacturer's representative, is an expert on that continent.

"South America," he observes, "in many ways, is a land of controversies. You will find an absolutely ridiculous studio. I remember one in particular during the mid-sixties which I found in Panama, where an engineer modified a certain Revox tape machine with a very funny console and ended up getting a world hit. If you had seen that studio you might have said 'what an interesting hallway.'"

"That's one side of South America. Then you'll find super facilities the likes of which you won't find in some areas in the U.S. super-complex facilities of unbelievable magnitude. And you'll find those facilities in places like Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Chile and definitely

(Continued on page MCI-18)

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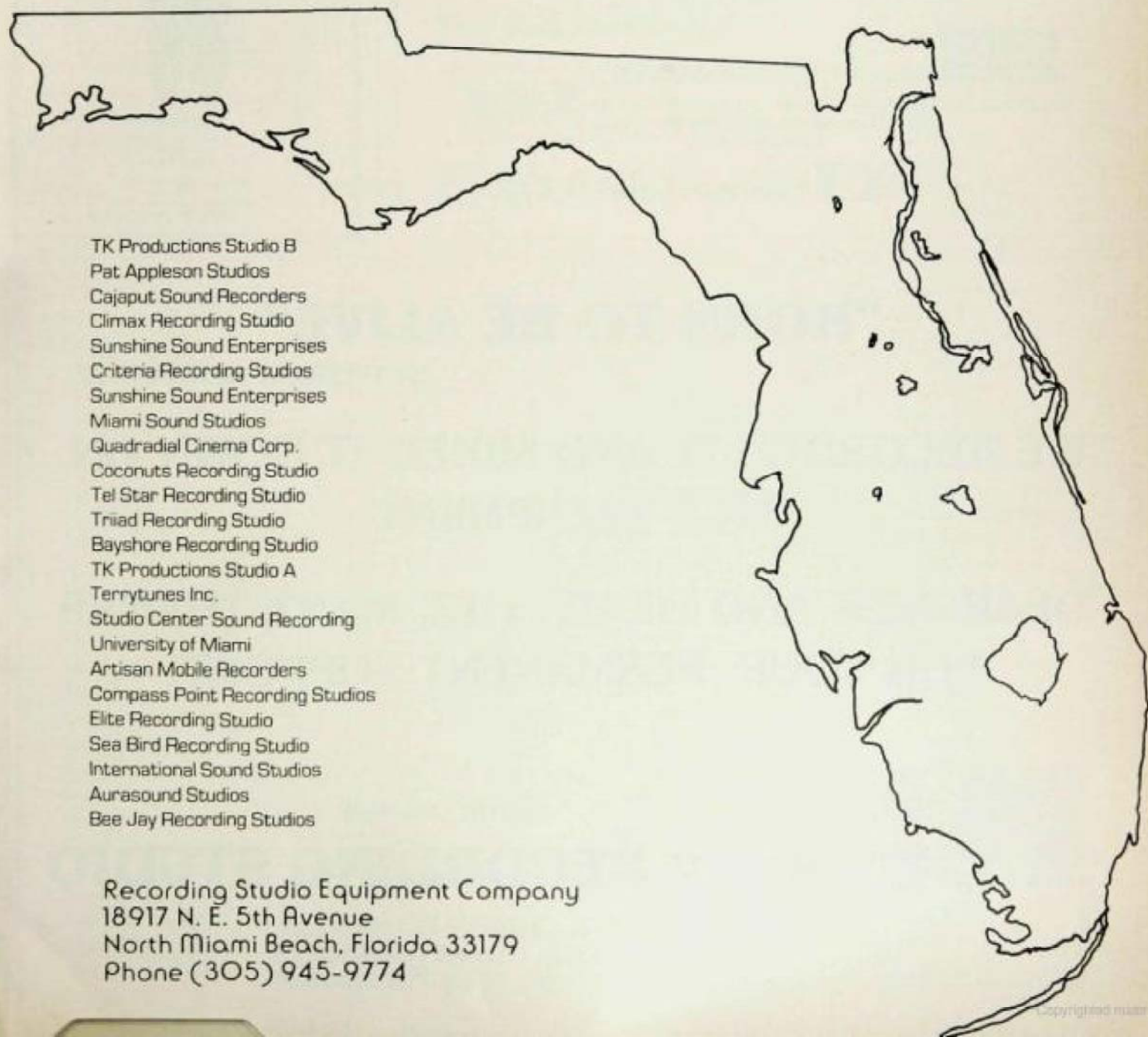


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MCI

Interiors

MCI manufactures its own transport motors (right), one at a time.

The purchasing department (right) looks over computer reports.



Test equipment and tape transport (below) are the tools being used by MCI engineer Reuel Ely to check out a proposed circuit change.



A component is checked after wave soldering (right). MCI's wave soldering machine is an in-line system which waxes and clips leads of components and wave solders the boards.



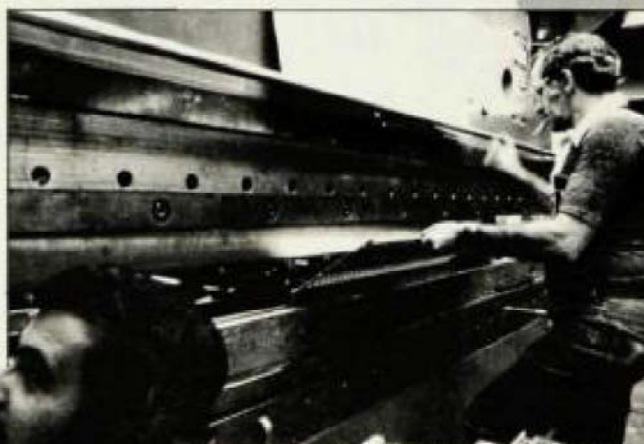
However, hand soldering (right) still plays an important role, side by side with progressive production techniques.



The stepped EQ switches for the JH-500 console (left) require skilled handwork.



Aspects of the production floor (above)—stuffing components in small pc boards.



The sheet metal shop includes such heavy equipment as this Cincinnati press brake machine.



Engineering conferences are frequently held to discuss user input, new advances in technology, ideas and sometimes even design problems.

Mechanical assembly (right), where mechanical parts are tested and assembled into transports, and sent on to the tape machine checkout for electronics and final test.



Craftsman Doug Schaad works on the oak ends for consoles.



Precision services (left) is responsible for quality control of many items, including the motors which they make.



Technicians in the JH-16 final test area (below) work on a 24-track recorder.



Special equipment (right) has been designed by MCI to test modules before they are put into a main-frame.



MCI designed its own packaging (above) to insure the safest possible journey for its equipment.



Numerically controlled Strip-pit (above) punches sheet metal at a rate of over 200 holes per minute.



A vital link (above) is the data processing department.



A portion of MCI's technical training schools (above) includes hands-on sessions fixing equipment the teachers have "doctored" for testing purposes.



A student (above) in MCI's technical training school asks questions in the production area as well as in the classroom.

Considering the miles of wires in consoles and recorders (above), the cabling and harnessing areas are very important.



...ve, a tape deck built up in the mechanical assembly area.



Jeep
Happy 25th,
See you in 2005!
Kent, Tom, Bill, Carl



Sie
room
from

It is



32-Track and Automation Lead Off Product Line-Up

MCI has come a long way from the early multi-track tape recorders and mixing consoles it began developing in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

At the vanguard now of its product lineup is the JH-32, a three speed, three-inch 32-track machine and JH-600 Series of low cost automated consoles. Soon... digital.

A recap of the current product line includes:

Recording/Remixing Consoles

JH-500C Series: What MCI claims is the first automation-ready, in-line production console. Available in four frame sizes and six layout versions equipped with either VU or Plasma Display meter panels. The new JH-556C model is designed for use with synchronized multi-track recorders.

JH-50 Automation: Optional automation system for the JH-500C Series which can be installed before shipment or in the studio. Can be incorporated or retrofitted to most audio consoles.

JH-600 Series: What is claimed to be the industry's first fully automated production console. JH-50 Automation is standard. Low cost and wide range of broadcast options for industry application are highlights of this in-line console, available in two frame sizes.

Tape Recorders

JH-16 Series: One or two inch master tape recorders available in configurations of 8-, 16- and 24-tracks with quick change heads for fast one-inch or two-inch conversion. Transport can accept up to 14-inch reels. Recorder designed for use with the AutoLocator III.

AutoLocator III: System control center for MCI's multi-track recorders. Features 10 memory locations and tape velocity indicator which simultaneously displays inches per second and pitch shift in 1/4 semitone increments.

JH-32 Series: What MCI claims is the industry's first three-inch, three speed 32-track master recorder. Includes new recording speed of 20 i.p.s. and AutoLocator IV.

JH-110 Series: 1/4-inch and 1/2-inch, three speed recorders. Mono to 4-track models, with RTZ III return to zero available.

RTZ III: Return To Zero is a microprocessor based function for the JH-110 Series transport with four additional memories. A special version called the RTZ III/M, featuring 20 addi-

tional memory locations, is standard on the JH-110 master ing machine.

JH-110A-8: Includes eight channels of electronics with the transport using one-inch tape at standard speeds of 7.5, 15 and 30 i.p.s. only. RTZ III is standard. Easily converted to 4-track, 1/2-inch.

JH-110BC: Two speed transport including basic features of the JH-110 Series, but includes specially designed broadcast electronics to provide additional features for broadcast industry such as monitor amplifier with loudspeaker, headphone jack, volume control and left-right channel select. RTZ III is standard.

JH-110M: First logically designed disk-mastering recorder having the transport microprocessor control lathe functions. The microprocessor based RTZ III/M is standard.

AutoLock: A SMPTE/EBU Generator/Reader/Synchronizer. Designed to allow user to interface any MCI tape machine to any code source, including video recorders, film cameras and other audio tape recorders. MCI AutoLock is microprocessor based and contains 10 "display" memory locations.

Digital electronics will be developed as a result of MCI and EMI, Ltd. entering into a licensing agreement under which MCI will manufacture digital tape recording equipment, based on technology developed by EMI.

A prototype of the first machine to be developed under the agreement—the MCI JH-220—two channel stereo tape recorder was displayed recently at the Assn. of Professional Recording Studios Exhibition (APRS) in London.

According to the G.C. "Jeep" Harned, production models of the JH-220 will be available by 1980. The first of these will go into EMI recording studios and be immediately available to artists using those studios.

Future joint projects under the licensing agreement will include future development of an editing system as well as multi-channel digital tape recorders.

Development work on both these projects is nearing completion at EMI's central research laboratories at Hages in Middlesex, England, and prototypes of both will be completed by MCI by the end of the 1979 with production slated for 1980.

EMI's central research laboratories, according to EMI, have

developed a digital recording system which makes the EMI/MCI machines competitive with any system in the world.

"In fact," comments Bhaskar Menon, chairman and chief executive officer of EMI Music Worldwide Operations, "we have no doubt that the EMI/MCI system is the very best in the world."

"Our central research laboratory has been involved in digital technology research for as long as anybody in the world, but in addition to having achieved a tremendous level of technical excellence we have also researched the requirements of our industry."

"We are confident that the technology that the EMI/MCI venture will offer the music industry will dovetail very precisely with their requirements. Ours has the unique advantage of being an affiliation between the equipment manufacturer, MCI, and an equipment user, EMI. Clearly, this fact alone gives us a head start in what is becoming a very hotly contested technological race."

According to Harned, "I think that the cooperation between the two companies has been very fruitful to both parties, in particular because of the way it has brought American technology and British ingenuity together."

"Ours is a partnership that is well equipped to give the music industry the very best in recording equipment."

For the most part MCI is vertically integrated and exercises a very tight quality control system on all its manufacturing.

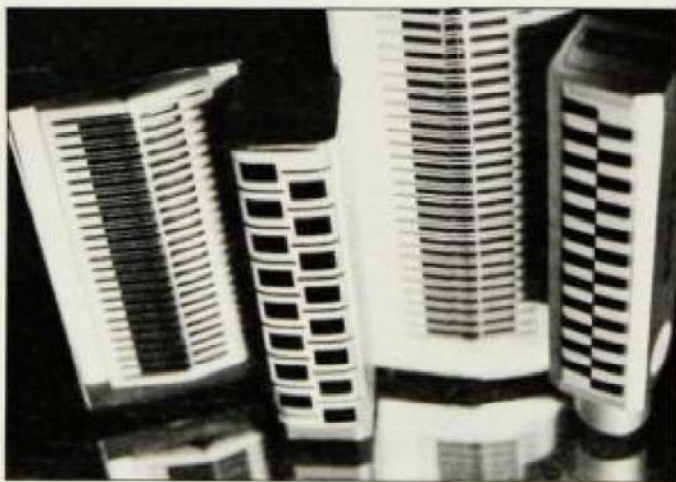
"We have incoming material control," says Meyer, "and intermediate, sub-assembly control. There are visual checks, mechanical and electronic checks. Consoles are subjected to vibration and shock. Each console, for example, sits on a mechanical type of vibrator system and is shaken for at least eight hours."

"Tape machines," adds Harned, "receive grueling quality control inspection as well. Our philosophy is to get the problem solved before it leaves the factory. Basically we can achieve any electronic function the console or tape machine might come up against and cycle and recycle the machines through them."

Typically an MCI console has 180 hours "on time" before leaving MCI, 60 hours of which are under thermal blankets.

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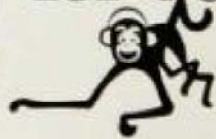
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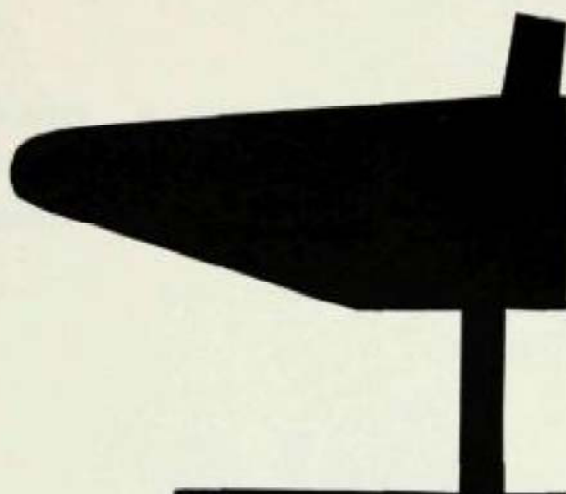


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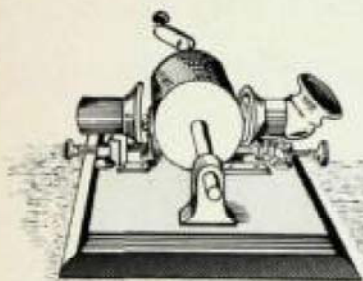
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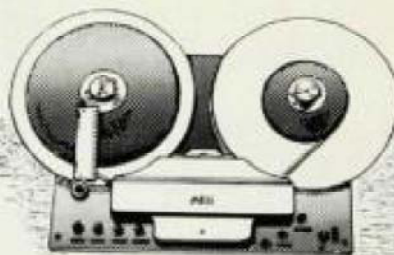


25 YEARS

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32 track recorder 1978



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count forward and count back? He said he could and we came up with the AutoLocator. We should have patented the damn thing right there and then. I remember that we took this tape machine and AutoLocator to the Los Angeles AES in 1971 and demonstrated it. Both Ampex and 3M introduced similar-type 'search to cue' systems but it gave us a good feeling to have something there that was quite a bit more sophisticated."

While MCI was not the first console maker with "automation," it did help pioneer the concept. Its JH-50 console automation gave the recording engineer the same advantages that multi-track techniques have given musicians and producers for several years. The ability to punch-in and pre-mix on a 24-track tape gives the musician the opportunity to "get it right." Before the automated console, the mixing process had been limited to how many hands can be put on the console to unlimited use of a 1½-inch splicing block.

Both the AutoLocator as well as its automation systems continue to go through generations of upgrading and improvements.

A recent new product is the MCI AutoLock, an SMPTE/EBU reader/generator/synchronizer, which is designed to work off any SMPTE/EBU code source. It locks numerous combinations of audio/audio, video/audio and film/audio tape machines together.

Harned was also at the forefront of 24-track technology in the late 1960s.

Remembers Harned: "It was at TTG Recording Studios in Los Angeles. Tom Hidley and I put it together. Actually, it was Hidley's suggestion. Everyone at the time was building 16 tracks. He was working as an engineer and part owner of TTG. He called me one night wondering if 24 tracks could be built. I said 'certainly, as long as the heads could be built.' I said the system is expandable to any number of channels. So he said he would send me a purchase order for a 24-track machine. We built it and it worked. It was clumsy, slow and not as sophisticated as those of today but it worked."

Now MCI is pioneering another step in analog recording with its JH-32, a three-inch, 32-track machine that also features a tape speed of 20 i.p.s. Two other manufacturers, 3M with its digital 32-track and Telefunken with its analog 32-track, two-inch machine, have that format available. Interestingly, though, the MCI unit is in the \$57,000 range. The 3M unit is \$150,000 while Telefunken's is \$70,000.

"You have to build what the users want," explains Harned. "I'm very much aware of that. I don't think we are in a position to build something and ram it down their throats. That three-inch, 32-track machine is a thing that has been asked upon us and is something I wasn't that anxious to do because of the enormous cost. The investment we've got in it right now is enormous. But at the time, a few years ago, everyone wanted it. The need for the three-inch is starting to kind of evaporate now because of the double-tracking thing... locking up two 24 tracks."

Harned agrees that with the expanding technology, studio entrepreneurs as well as the industry are at a crossroads.

"These are hard and trying times," says Harned. "And we are part of an emotional, creative and maybe erratic world, which we have to realize. Digital is not the future. We have to realize too

that we will probably have a long period of dual systems. There will still be a lot of analog. And a lot depends on manufacturers... how far a company is willing to go and realize."

Seeking to get more user input, MCI recently hosted a workshop in Fort Lauderdale with various studio owners and their chief technical people for the exchange of ideas.

"The company is very open to lis-

tening," explains Meyer. A hard thing to overcome is the all or nothing syndrome. MCI, to some extent, is in a very dangerous position of having gained a large acceptance. At the same time, however, you have to listen to the people who are using your products. Console and tape recorder makers are not in the studio every day. And recording studio engineers and mixers are not manufacturing equipment. Even

though we might be a leading firm in technological developments, it doesn't mean we don't have short comings."

Now MCI is the vanguard of digital recording.

Explains Harned: "EMI used to build recording studio equipment and still has an audio development team in England. About seven years ago they decided to get into the development of digital recording. That

was at about the same time the BBC hooked up with 3M for the joint development of the 3M system. EMI has been working on digital recording since, I believe, as early as 1972 and canned it for a few years since the hardware wasn't available. They cranked up again in 1975 and it's slowly evolved over the last few years at something very sophisticated. EMI

(Continued on page MCI-29)

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Lutz H. Meyer: vice president, marketing.



Thomas May: vice president, engineering.



Chuck Walters: corporate administration, in front of the new progressive assembly area, a technique he introduced at MCI.

G.C. "Jeep" Harned: founder, owner and president of MCI, Inc.

MCI

Individuals

C.E. Griffin: executive vice president.



Carla Kachigian: secretary to Jeep Harned and the first office assistant MCI employed almost 10 years ago.



Paul Ulliman: director of administration and finance.

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Congratulations Jeep and Joyce

Harry

MCI At 25:

Continued from page MCI-25

called me about a year ago and asked whether or not we would be interested in discussing a partnership arrangement on the development of the digital tape recorder. I said "sure."

"We flew over to London and heard a demonstration of what they were working on and I was quite impressed. I didn't hear any great improvements between good analog and digital but I could see the possibilities. Later we met with EMI's attorneys and drew up an agreement. There were 14 of them negotiating with myself and my wife Joyce. These were record company attorneys, the toughest. We came out of there limp but we got what we wanted . . . a royalty agreement and the percentages that we can live with. We will manufacture the product here in Fort Lauderdale and manufacture it and distribute it with the MCI logo worldwide.

"I'm impressed with what EMI has done. We've done developmental work here with the transport, a set of heads, the read and write electronics and quarter-inch tape. They are involved in developing the digital circuitry. We'll build the circuitry and package the whole thing."

EMI will be among MCI's first customers, putting the initial mastering machines into their various operations around the world.

Digital is still a little "foggy" as far as the overall industry is concerned, Harned points out. "The only thing that digital can give you right now," Harned explains, "is the right and the ability to do multiple copies without deterioration. And the major record companies like EMI, Decca and CBS that do mastering all over the world will benefit. Tapes made in Vienna or London can be shipped to India or Nigeria for mastering without quality loss. They will be able to master a record anywhere and not have EQ intrude into the mastering process. Right now you can buy the same LP in two different countries and notice incredible quality difference."

Towards the future: "Apart from digital you are going to see more of an evolution to the twin 24-track. I think we will see a deeper marriage of analog and digital. That is, digital control circuits controlling the analog for the next generation of consoles and tape machines," says Harned.

"We're married to the profession of recording. I would anticipate our expanding our equipment with more broadcast applications. We have a little tape machine that's very acceptable to broadcasters. We're making good inroads into the European broadcast market and that's quite an achievement since it has always been Studer and Telefunken over there. Another thing that's happening is the advent of AM stereo. All those stations will have to have stereo machines. That's an exploding market right there."

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Individuals Cont.



Frank Poelart, machine shop manager. The machine shop includes programmable lathes as well as precision machinists to produce the high tolerance parts required for recorders.



Mike Starcevic, mechanical assembly manager, behind a row of decks ready to go to the tape machine checkout area.



Chuck Magors, precision services manager, watches the motor winding operation.



Larry Lamoray, center, engineering services manager, discusses a possible new design with project engineers Ted Staros and Mike Biffignani.

Mechanical engineers Van Merkel and Ralph Gartner confer.



Console checkout manager Wally Watkins, at right.



George Kuchams, manager tape machine checkout, explains changes due to new transformerless electronics to JH-110 final test technicians.



Al Schuetz, manager of manufacturing, engineering checks boards as they go down the line of the in-line wave soldering system.



Production manager Connie Gancitano, standing in the cable and wire area. Cables are sometimes made over 50 feet long.

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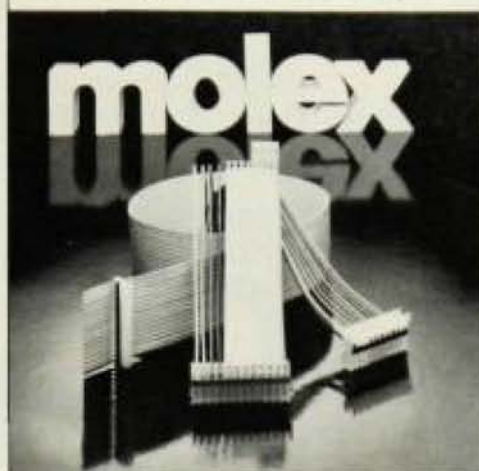
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• Continued from page MCI-6

console was nothing like the Europeans had ever seen before. They were accustomed to different thinking. One fellow sat and looked at our board for hours. The interested observer was Phil Dunn, of the Marquee, a London nightclub. Marquee owners were about to build a studio. Dunn went back and convinced them of the superiority of our products. Marquee placed an order, built a studio and made themselves home for all the early mixing by Elton John and Gus Dudgeon."

The Europeans accepted MCI's technology and the firm integrated its products to suit both domestic and foreign needs.

"We have found great acceptance for our thinking and operations from the Europeans. We are very involved with the Eastern block," says Harned.

In all, MCI's international business extends to more than 30 countries worldwide. "The foreign market comprises about 45% of our business," says Harned. "Our domestic market, which includes most of the major recording companies as well as dozens of independent studios, gives us the remaining portion of a business that will record revenues of nearly \$20 million in 1979."

"The business," he continues, "is growing in far greater proportions than we had ever imagined. Our biggest problem now is getting the employees to manufacture our full line of products. We currently have 375 employees, skilled and unskilled. We need 100 more immediately and approximately 350 by the end of the year if we are to meet our production schedule."

MCI has a backlog of customers waiting for its newest console, the JH-6000. It's the industry's first automated production console.

"They are waiting patiently," says Harned, "because they know fully the quality of what they will be getting."

MCI is now located at 4007 NE 6th Ave. in Fort Lauderdale. The firm recently purchased the corporate headquarters of the STP Corp. in a major expansion move. The new site is located at 1400 West Commercial Blvd. nearby.

The current site consists of 80,000 square feet over five buildings. The new building is 23.5 acres consisting of 156,000 square feet with parking space for more than 700 automobiles. Eventually the current site will house the machine shop and sheet metal plant—with everything else located at the new headquarters by the first part of 1980. By that time MCI will employ more than 700 people.

CREDITS

Editor: Earl Page, Assistant Editor: Susan Peterson, Writer: Jim McCullagh, Art: Gibbitt

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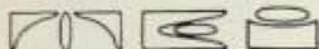
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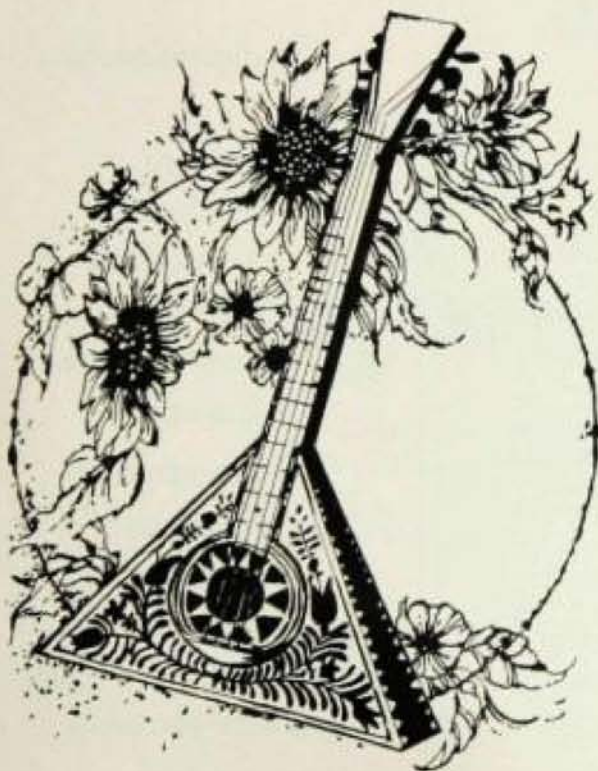
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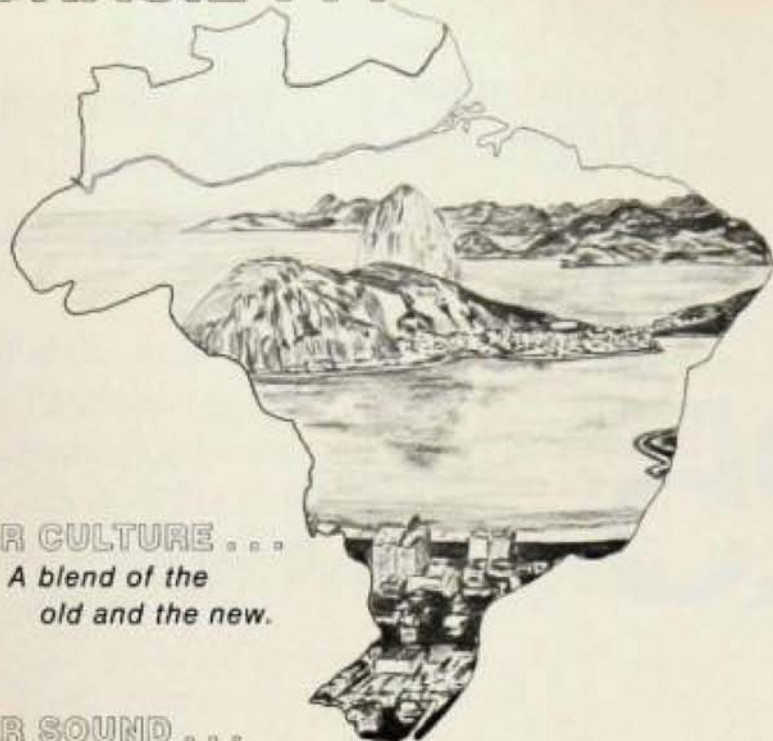
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Marketing Innovations

• Continued from page MCI-8

MCI introduced it at the AES in Los Angeles in 1971, the same time firms like Ampex and 3M introduced systems with the same idea in mind.

"It gave us a good feeling," Harned recalls, "to have something there that was a bit more sophisticated than what they had."

"In any event," he continues, "I decided to price it very low then. I think originally the price was \$1,200. We probably lost \$400 on each one. The reason for that was I knew how the big guys felt. They knew they couldn't build one for \$1,200 so they stayed away from it. Nobody realized the importance of the thing. So nobody wanted to manufacture something like this because they couldn't compete with us."

"It wasn't until 1976 that the other manufacturers realized the power of this thing, including Studer. But it allowed us to sell tape machines. Finally the other manufacturers got smart. But we had a ball for those six years."

Another key ingredient in the MCI marketing philosophy has been the ability to design, manufacture and market professional recording studio electronics at "affordable" prices, thus enabling many entrepreneurs to get into the studio business.

"That's been an important factor," says Harned, "but we have never sacrificed quality. We've always tried to key in user needs."

Where does MCI position itself now in the world recording studio market?

Says Harned: "I think we're competing now with three or four major companies heavily. Of course, there's us and you've got Ampex, 3M and Harrison. There are a lot of little guys coming up that we don't compete against. Some will succeed, others won't. I don't know. It's hard to say when manufacturers are reluctant to give out their dollar figures."

"Actually," he continues, "you don't know where you stand all the time. I know we send an awful lot of stuff out there. The market seems to be limitless. I don't understand it. Nobody ever has."

"15 years ago, Claude Hill, who used to be an MCI sales man, said someone did a market research program on what the capacity of the U.S. was for 16-track tape machines. And the market group came up with something like 80 machines total. In those days, you were looking at CBS, RCA and Wally Heider . . . that was all."

"It's interesting how the industry has developed, the hardware and the complexity of the music have developed together and the complex things you can do with the equipment now just couldn't be done 10 years ago."

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Jose Mari C. Gonzalez, President and General Manager, an engineer himself, is seen here at the controls of the 24-track MCI console in Studio D which features JH-50 Full Automation.



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Exports Reach

Continued from page MCI-12

in the growing market of Brazil. In fact, you have to treat Brazil as a continent separated slightly by language. You'll also find them in Argentina. There are a great many total record company complexes in South America which incorporate a recording studio.

"But," he continues, "I don't think companies there are the kind of financial resources to stay abreast of technology they do in the U.S. But it's developing very strongly. Mexico has become much more state-of-the-art."

G.C. "Jeep" Harned recalls how MCI achieved a beachhead in the European market.

"I was the first American manufacturer," he looks back, "to haul a mixing console to Europe . . . to the Assn. of Professional Recording Studios Show in London, in 1972. But they killed me. The board was untypically British and people came along and said it was a bloody mess."

One interested visitor to the MCI suite was an independent mixer/engineer named Phil Dunn who was affiliated with the Marquee nightclub which wanted to put together a state-of-the-art recording studio.

"He convinced them that our console was the one to get," says Harned. They did and Gus Dudgeon mixed a good portion of Elton John's early music on the board.

"It was so reliable," adds Harned, "that it sat in the control room for two years without having to have a single part replaced."

"Interestingly," he continues, "when I came back from that show I had a list of requirements that the Europeans wanted to see in consoles. We took our 416 apart and reloaded it leg-wise. The net result was a better console and it also became a much more acceptable console in the U.S."

Harned also developed interesting approaches to marketing pro audio abroad.

"Selling internationally," he says, "was a problem. But when I was setting up dealers around the world I established a system that we sell MCI products in U.S. dollars. The dealer would make the conversion to their own currency the day the transaction took place. That stops transshipping dead in its tracks."

"There's no way a guy from Germany can come over here and buy a machine in New York cheaper than he can in Germany. I've noticed a number of firms have begun to approach international business this way, like an IBM. It greatly centralizes things and protects the manufacturer."

One other approach MCI takes on the international level is to offer extensive dealer training workshops/seminars at Fort Lauderdale, Fla., headquarters, where foreign dealers can get schooled in current and ongoing pro audio technology.

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