

# In Memoriam

**P**eter Baxandall, AES fellow and Silver Medal recipient, who died last year, was probably best known for his feedback tone control circuit. In 1950, he entered his design into an amateur competition sponsored by the BSRA (British Sound Recording Association—later to form the nucleus of the AES British Section) and won first prize: a \$25 wristwatch. Later, noting that his design had been incorporated into possibly millions of hi-fi systems, Peter remarked, somewhat ruefully, that even a small royalty would have made him a rich man.

Peter was born in 1921 and after attending Kings College School in Wimbledon, England, he went on to study electrical engineering at Cardiff Technical College, Wales, and received his BSc (Eng) in 1942. After two years as a radio instructor for the Fleet Air Arm, he joined RSRE (Royal Signals and Radar Establishment) in Malvern and remained there until 1971 when he took early retirement to become an electroacoustical consultant.

RSRE or TRE (Telecommunications Research Establishment) as it was known during the war—any reference to radar was omitted in order to throw Hitler off the scent—employed at that time some of the finest scientific brains in the country, and Peter was soon established in the Circuit Research Division headed by Professor F. C. Williams. Peter's colleagues at TRE remember him for the enormous breadth of his knowledge. Although best known for his contribution to audio design, he was equally adept at radio frequencies. His generosity and patience in passing his knowledge on to others was one of his trademarks. Peter always sought, and often found, the simplest and



Peter Baxandall  
1921-1996

most elegant solution to any technical problem. In this he was probably trying to emulate one of his heroes, A. D. Blumlein. Blumlein, coincidentally, also worked at TRE, but was killed in an plane crash in 1942, so Peter never had a chance to meet him. Peter also had the enviable ability to commit his ideas to paper in a form so clear and concise that many of his letters and technical reports would serve as admirable textbooks without editing.

During his time as a consultant he worked on an extraordinary range of projects from audio frequency transformers, radio frequency carrier microphones, powered loudspeakers, dipole and electrostatic loudspeakers, loudspeakers with motional feedback, bandpass loudspeakers, line-source loudspeakers, oscillators, high-speed tape duplicating equipment, high-precision microphone calibration methods, and many more. His articles on amplifier design published in *Wireless World* (vol. 83, no. 1503, Nov. 1977) and his seminal chapter on electrostatic loudspeakers (*Loud-*

*speaker and Headphone Handbook*, Focal Press, Butterworth Heinemann, 2nd edition, 1994) are good examples of his ability to present complex topics in a simple, concise and readable form.

Peter always had a keen interest in music and was an avid amateur recordist. His favorite system included a pair of BBC-designed 4038 ribbon microphones (arranged as a Blumlein crossed-pair, of course) together with a highly modified reel-to-reel Revox tape recorder, which he later swapped for a Sony PCM system. He even exploited the reciprocity principle and employed a loudspeaker as a microphone—albeit a rather bulky one.

Peter was a generous, enthusiastic and kind person, always willing to explain some of the mysteries of audio engineering. Charitable to a fault, his severest form of criticism, mainly reserved for those he regarded as being on the lunatic fringe of audio, was a mild “you know... [so and so] is really not sound.”

Peter Baxandall was a lifelong supporter of the AES, often making the long journey from Malvern to attend the London meetings and enjoy the post lecture discussions over an Italian meal with his many friends and fellow *bon viveurs*. He became a fellow of the AES in 1980 and was awarded its Silver Medal in 1993 in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of audio engineering.

A remarkable man, probably the last of the truly great audio analog circuit designers, he will be greatly missed but fondly remembered by his many friends and colleagues. Peter is survived by his widow, a son, two daughters and two grandchildren.

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