

Sound and Light Systems for Bohemian Shows at Old Monte Rio School

By Brian Torr

Introduction

For many years, the sound and light systems used for the Bohemian Shows at the (now Old) Monte Rio School's multipurpose room was the same equipment used at the Monte Rio Amphitheater for live performances. The equipment was owned by the Monte Rio Recreation and Parks District.

It was only for the last few years at the Old Monte Rio School that we used sound equipment provided by the Bohemian Grove via McCune Sound.

Sound System

The sound system consisted of a Karman-Kardan Commander CA-35 mixer / amplifier, two ElectroVoice 664 microphones (aka "Buchanan Hammer"), one ElectroVoice 636 microphone, and one other microphone that I believe was a Shure (I don't recall the model), and two column speakers, each about 5' tall. .



Figure 1. Harman-Kardan Commander CA-35. The one we used had the option to handle four microphones. The black bezel to the left was removed, and that was where the controls for Microphones 3 and 4 were located.



Figure 2. ElectroVoice 664 Microphone. This was a very rugged microphone, built in Buchanan, Michigan, and it was claimed you could pound nails with it, thus it got the nickname “Buchanan Hammer”. These appeared on many album covers from the late 1950s to early 1970s.



Figure 3. ElectroVoice 636 SlimAir Microphone

Lighting System

The lighting system was entirely home-made by my father, Lee Torr, III, my brothers Michael and Lee, and me. Originally they were used for the amphitheater and consisted of one 8-foot light strip and two 3-foot light strips. The 8-foot strip consisted of eight 100W or 150W spot lights (1200W max total) and the 3-foot strip consisted of three 100W or 150W spot lights (each strip up to 450W max total). .

When used at the amphitheater, the 8 foot strip was used as a foot-light, supported on two 4x4 posts a few feet in front of the stage. The 3 foot strips were hung vertically on the side walls of the stage.

When used for the Bohemian show, the 8-foot strip was hung below the basketball backboard support (the backboard also supported the familiar “Welcome Bohemians” sign after we removed the hoop). The 3-foot strips were hung from the volleyball standards.

We realized that we needed to dim these lights, especially the ones on the 8-foot strip since they were so close to the performers (on at least two occasions, the tuba player hit the lights). So I built a dimmer box. See Figure 4. It consisted of four 600W dimmer controls. Since the 8-foot strip could draw as much as 1200W, I re-wired it so that it had two separate power cords, each powering four lamps, and each connected to a separate dimmer channel.



Figure 4. Dimmer box used at Bohemian Shows at Old Monte Rio School

In Closing

When I see all the high-tech gear used today for the sound and lights at the Monte Rio Variety Show, I can't help but think of how "stone-age" our equipment used to be by comparison.