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## **A BRIEF LOOK AT DOLBY'S 30 YEARS**

**BY  
JOHN F. ALLEN**

HIGH PERFORMANCE STEREO™



# HPS-4000®

## HIGH PERFORMANCE STEREO

*FIRST IN DIGITAL STEREO*

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**Founded in London in 1965 with only four assistants, Ray Dolby's Dolby Laboratories has grown into an international manufacturing and licensing business with offices in England, the United States as well as Japan. Annual revenues now exceed \$40 million. Dolby's core business has been the development and marketing of products which reduce or eliminate the audibility of noise associated with recording and transmission systems. In addition to a record of elegant engineering, the company's success is equally owed to a small dedicated staff of application specialists who provide (often in person) technicians around the world with help in using what has become a wide range of Dolby products.**

**The first noise reduction system was completed in the summer of 1965. Called "A type", this development became the foundation upon which Dolby built its products for the recording, television and motion picture industries. The type "A" system was first used with a commercial recording in 1966. The first long playing record mastered with Dolby "A" was released in November, 1966. Today, over 170,000 channels of "A" type have been sold.**

**1967 saw the first development of a more economical consumer noise reduction system known as "B" type and subsequent licensing activities. The "B" type system revolutionized the use of the audio cassette and changed the way we bought prerecorded music. Today, over 500 million products utilizing a Dolby circuit have been produced worldwide.**

**By 1970, Dolby had begun to make small inroads into the motion picture industry. In December of that year, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE became the first conventional optical soundtrack release mastered with Dolby noise reduction. By 1976, Dolby's stereo optical soundtrack including a surround channel had been developed and was in use in theatres. This soundtrack made it practical to exhibit motion pictures in stereo without the cost and reliability problems associated with older magnetic striping techniques.**

**Six years in development, Dolby Spectral Recording (SR) was introduced in 1986. The**

SR system took analog recordings and optical motion picture soundtracks to the practical limit of their performance capabilities, giving a new lease on life for analog studio facilities facing competition from digital recorders and other devices. Since its introduction, SR has been installed in over 7,500 theatres, over 90,000 audio channels and used with over 500 releases.

Beginning in 1985, Dolby Laboratories embarked on research exploring ways to reduce the number of bits required to store or transmit digital audio. Seven years later, this work had advanced to such an extent that a six channel, reduced bit rate digital motion picture optical digital soundtrack, Dolby Digital, was introduced in ten theatres with BATMAN RETURNS. Today, some 1,700 theatres are equipped with the Digital process.

Ray Dolby's legendary "little" sound company has earned its success, one could say, the old fashioned way: one well-conceived product and one satisfied customer at a time.

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