

Studio Development

The most striking example of studio development during the year was the new Broadcasting Centre opened in Birmingham. This is the first building in the United Kingdom designed and built as a combined television and radio complex. For television it incorporates two studios, both equipped for 625-line colour production and accompanied by comprehensive telecine and video tape facilities.

Radio

Coverage and Reception

The present programme of VHF coverage for Radio 2, Radio 3 and Radio 4 was completed with the opening of the Windermere relay station. There are now 75 transmitting stations providing VHF coverage, free from the background noise and interference which frequently spoils reception on medium and long waves, especially after dark. The VHF service is available to all but a tiny percentage of the population.

Stereophony

During the year Rowridge, the high-power transmitter in the Isle of Wight, started stereophonic transmissions, using a specially designed receiving system to pick up the Radio 3 service direct from Wrotham. Rowridge has extended the stereophonic service to a further million or more listeners in southern England.

Work is in hand on replacing the present stereophonic programme distribution network, from London to transmitters in the Midlands and North, with a new system of BBC design, using pulse code modulation. This will be capable of carrying three stereophonic programmes, as well as a number of monophonic ones, with negligible degradation of quality. The BBC plans to start bringing the new system into operation before the end of 1972, and at the same time to start stereophonic broadcasts on Radio 2 and, to a smaller extent, on Radio 4.

The BBC hopes to begin stereophonic transmissions in Scotland and Wales by 1974. The programmes for these Services will be carried by BBC pulse code modulation equipment over wide-band circuits rented from the Post Office. The BBC is well aware of the considerable public interest in stereophony and is eager to effect this extension as rapidly as possible.

Local Radio

The BBC has shared in the work of the Technical Working Party set up by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. The Working Party's task is to consider the technical implications of the introduction of commercial local radio stations, since both they and the BBC's local stations will be users of medium wavelengths. In order to accommodate the new services, there will have to be a significant reduction of the frequencies now used by BBC radio.

The twenty BBC local stations will continue to use VHF, but duplicated transmission on medium waves will extend the services to many listeners