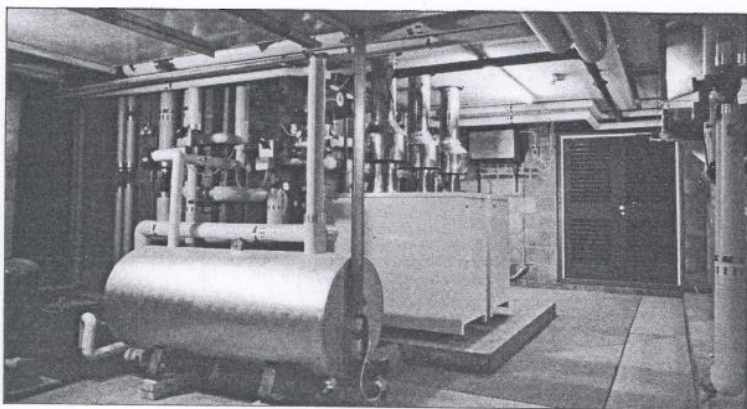
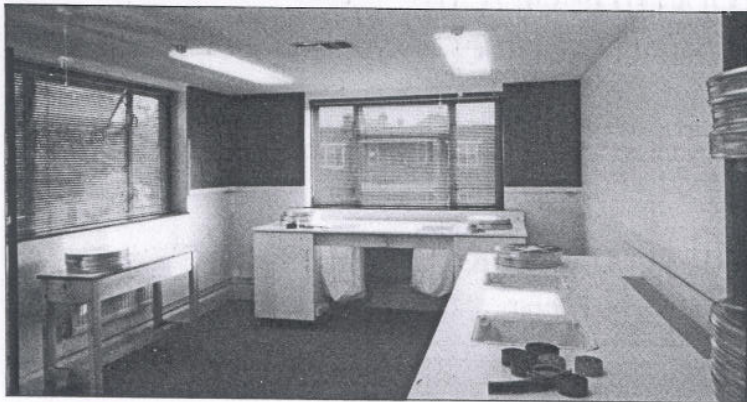




Twickenham is regarded by many as the Rolls Royce of sound studios. This week it adds to that reputation with the opening of a brand new £3 million complex

Air-conditioned comfort in new £3m Sound Centre



TWICKENHAM'S decision to invest £3 million in a new Sound Centre came about because of the five-year film production boom up to 1985, when for every film going into the studio's dubbing theatre, two were being turned away, according to Oscar-nominated director of sound, Gerry Humphreys.

"I kept a list of those rejected productions to prove it wasn't just pie in the sky, and, after long discussions with my fellow directors and company shareholders, the new centre was agreed upon a year ago last March."

The site of the centre, a three-storey building which features a dubbing theatre, an ADR theatre and 31 cutting rooms above a car park, was previously taken by an old asbestos warehouse. It had been there for years and was the only space at Twickenham left on which to build.

Humphreys sat down with his colleagues and sketched plans for the new centre on a piece of graph paper.

"I knew approximately the dimensions I wanted for the dubbing theatre, the largest theatre, and for the ADR theatre, and what was left after allowing for the equipment and projection rooms and so on I could divide up into cutting rooms.

"With those I didn't want to end up with tiny little cutting rooms. Editors, directors and producers have to sit in those rooms for a long, long time and since to a large extent our bread and butter depends on them liking us and recommending us to others I wanted them to have

a place in which they'd feel reasonably comfortable. So we've given them room to breathe and walk around in. The rooms are air-conditioned and have TVs and refrigerators and there's kitchens with microwave ovens."

Humphreys took his graph paper sketches to architect Jim Blackmore, who had designed the Novello Lodge complex of 10 cutting rooms and eight production offices which was built in the sixties next to the warehouse where the new centre was to be. Blackmore's major suggestion was to turn Humphreys' design around 180 degrees. It was a move forced by local planning regulations to prevent high buildings blocking light to nearby flats, but it turned out to the centre's advantage by leaving a way open for a covered three foot long link to be built between the new centre and the older Novello Lodge.

The plan also included new access to the studios, with new roads, iron gates and a gatehouse. It is, says Humphreys, a proper entrance "which should be more inviting than the old one when people come to see the place for the first time".

The old warehouse was demolished on July 8 last year, and building of the shell of the centre was finished in February, when Humphreys performed an ancient topping out ritual on its roof by cementing in the final 74

● The exterior of the new Sound Centre (top), one of the cutting rooms (centre) and the air-conditioning plant (bottom)