

ALTEC – A FURTHER WORD ON THE COMPANY'S HISTORY

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As a lifelong enthusiast of high-quality sound reproduction, I have been in touch with Altec, an acronym meaning "all technical" -since the late Sixties. Among the company's large portfolio of audio products, the iconic 604 series of duplex loudspeakers called my attention deeply, as during an audiophile meeting, back in the late Seventies, I had the opportunity to listen to the performance of a pair of 604-B transducers, baffle-assembled and coupled to a pentode tube amplifier, to reproduce the Tchaikovsky *1812 Overture*, digitally recorded on the famous Telarc stereo disc DG-10041. The *1812 Overture*, recorded in 1978, was one of the first digital recordings ever made. There is a warning on the jacket to which it is highly advisable to pay attention: there are cannon shots that are recorded at very high volumes! They go very low in the frequency extremes which could blow the loudspeakers. The sturdy cast frame, rear mount supporting an Alnico V magnet, 15" paper cone and the multicellular HF horn of the Altec 604- B transducers, driven by a Harmon-Kardon Citation II power amplifier reproduced the cannon shots with an unbelievable quality and fidelity without perturbing the electro-mechanical structure of the speaker!

Jacket of the Telarc
LP DG 10041.

The power amplifier was a 60-W behemoth using four 6550 beam power tubes (originally four GEC KT-88s) and six 12BY7A video output pentodes, driving the pair of 604-Bs.

Since then, Altec has been an audio reference brand for me even considering the unfeasibility of getting its products here in Brazil due to high price. Considering my knowledge of the history of "Altec" I was surprised with the article: "The Altec TV Set!," by L. Sibley in April's *Tube Collector*, on the Company as a distributor of television receivers.



Citation II amplifier

Probably such meandering industrial activity came through the Company's origin, as since the birth of the "Talkies" in the late Twenties, high quality cinema sound reproduction was related to its first cousins, corporate institutions,

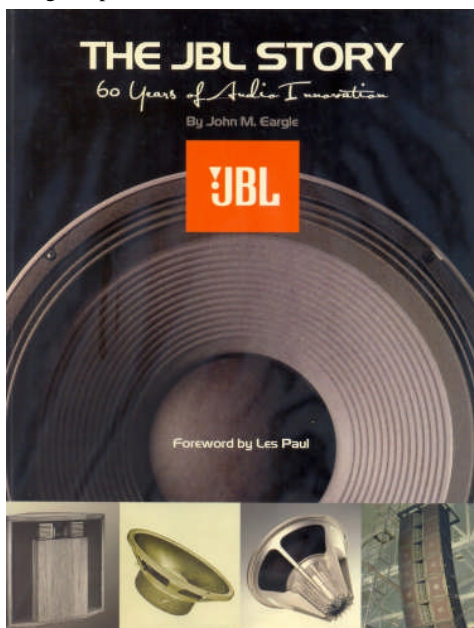
Western Electric, Electrical Research Products, Inc. (ERPI) and James B. Lansing..

Certainly such companies' legendary high-quality products allied with a peculiar corporate development involved led to misinterpretation of many aspects on the history of Altec, as wisely warned by the author in the afore mentioned paper.

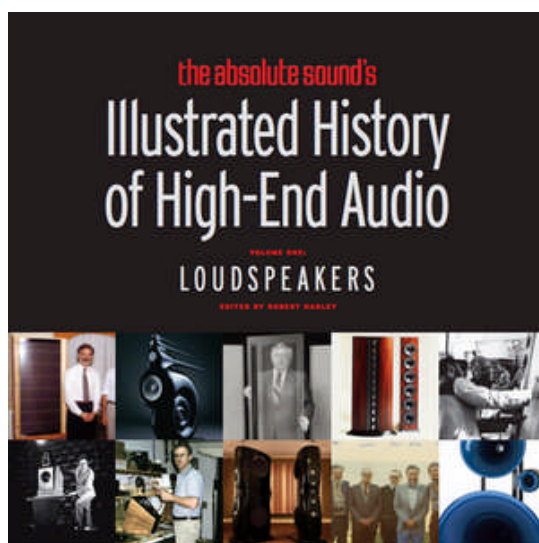
In this way as a further word on the bibliographic data related on the history of this remarkable company, it is my intention to add the following additional authoritative references to the ones already mentioned in the Sibley article:

1- The JBL Story – 60 Years of Audio Innovation, by John M. Eargle. This massive fully illustrated book tells the history of JBL including topics behind the development of innovative applications for consumer products as well as system installations for stadium, tour sound, movie theaters, and recording studios. The book deals also with such corporate aspects as the founding of Altec and later JBL and Altec merging in a new company, the Altec Lansing Corporation.

Cover of Eargle's book.



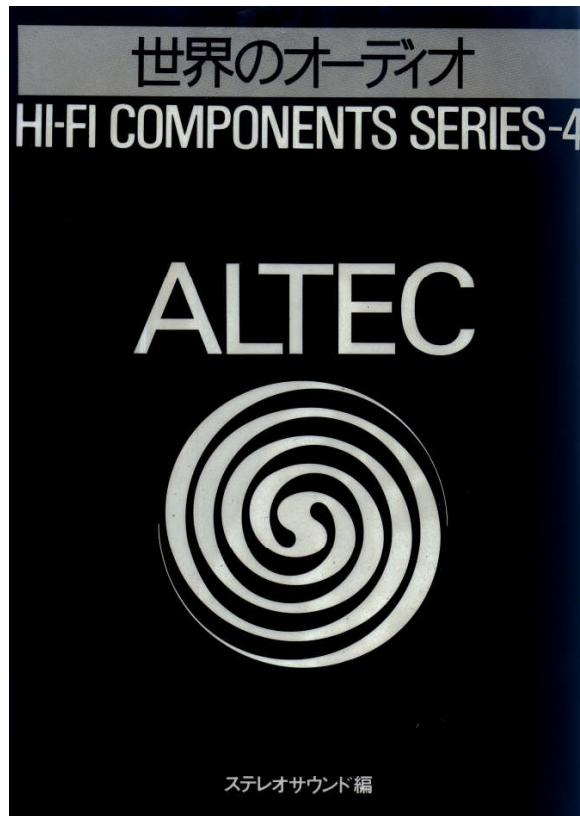
2 – Illustrated History of High-End Audio – Volume 1 – Loudspeakers. The first of three volumes coordinated by the editor of the magazine *The Absolute Sound*, Robert Harley, a 320-page coffee-table edition covering the evolution of high-performance loudspeakers from their earliest days to the present, profiling the companies, products, and individuals who helped create the most innovative, influential, and iconic loudspeakers of the past and present. The history of Altec is commented-on by one of the *TAS* music reviewers and columnist Steven Stone. The book covers many other topics related to the company.



Cover of Illustrated History of High-End Audio – Volume 1 – Loudspeakers

3 – Altec – Hi-Fi Components Series – 4. Supplement published by the Japanese magazine *Stereo Sound* in 1977. The 211 page, fully illustrated publication, many photographs in color, on the Altec loudspeaker product line, loudspeaker enclosures projects, technical

evaluations, electronic components, audiophile listening-room profiles, well as a pictorial timeline of company-milestones from 1924 up to 1977. A photographic time line is reproduced covering the years 1934 to 1951.



Cover of ALTEC –
Hi-Fi Components
Series – 4.

It is interesting to notice that, as per the time line, the 604-B was launched in the market circa 1951.

The Hi-Fi Components Series – 4 is published in Japanese. However, being fully illustrated, it is quite understandable for Western readers. After all, a photograph is worth a thousand words!

NOTES:

The Citation II amplifier is described on author Fazano's Web site, http://www-fazanopro.br/high-fidelity_sets.htm. A

circuit diagram is available in Sams Photofact Set 495, Folder 11.

Telarc is still in business, as the Telarc International Corporation, 23307 Commerce Park Rd., Beachwood, OH 44122, USA.

On private-brand manufacture of TV sets. It is routinely reported that as of 1950 there were 100+ manufacturers (or brands), each praying for, say, a 3% share of the market. Altec was apparently one of them. Private-branding was clearly a way to test the market without setting up a complete factory. The editor has a Fada (F. A. D. Andrea) 10" table set that, on close examination, uses a "630" chassis made by RCA Victor. The Fada factory literature includes a schematic right out of the drafting department at RCA. Also, while arranging a group of Photofacts, it was noticed that a Crosley table set, possibly the 10-401 of 1950, had a chassis identical to that of a Du Mont RA-series table model. The Sams organization had used the same photographs for both! - Ed