

company's expansion into overseas sales then the construction business.

In 1992, Parry and MSI colleagues Chad

for a larger company with the same group of people, which makes it extremely satisfying."

When SPL merged with AVI in 2008, the

professionalism, creativity and a systematic approach to problem solving. We look forward to continued good work together."

# Founding Father

BY CHUCK ANSBACHER

**W**hen Robert Simpson first discovered an interest for lighting and sound while at school in the late '50s, there was no AV industry to speak of. In fact, the only possibility to work in anything closely resembling what we now call AV arose when he had a chance to do lighting and sound for college dances.

In 1964, when Robert co-founded the now legendary Electrosonic, that void was filled, and an industry was born. "It can be said that we started the 'systems business,' with every job being custom engineered," he boasted, understandably filled with pride having established one of the founding members of the modern AV industry.

While Electrosonic initially cut its teeth in the lighting control business as one of the first companies to introduce practical scene-setting to



Robert Simpson,  
Electrosonic

architectural lighting control, Simpson quickly saw the first shoots of modern audiovisual beginning to emerge when the Kodak Carousel was introduced. "A number of companies quite independently came up with the idea of the 'electronic dissolve unit,'" he explained. "This was a modern take on the established 'dissolving view' magic lantern presentation of the 19th Century. The combination of two automatic slide projectors and a dissolve unit linked to a sound track enabled 'film like' presentations to be made inexpensively. What developed into the 'multi-image' business became the basis

of Electrosonic's AV activities, both in terms of products and of large scale systems." The rest, as they say, is history.

Simpson's contributions to the industry include much more than being one of its founding fathers. Being involved in EXPO '67

in Montreal, QC, which he sees as a catalyst event in establishing new markets for AV, is a career highlight, as is doing the initial technical design and feasibility assessment for the 850 monitor videowall that Electrosonic installed in the Telecommunications Pavilion at EXPO '92 in Seville."

Of course, having been in the industry for over 50 years, Robert is always eager to give something back. He has written numerous books and articles on AV and lighting control topics, most notably *Lighting Control – Technology and Applications*, which was published in 2003, and the publication "Electrosonic World", which he started in 1980 and has written ever since. He also participates in industry training programs like those of InfoComm.

While Robert is grateful to be honored as a founder of the industry in the SCN Hall of Fame, he knows he is only one man, supported by many. "I am more pleased that, by recognizing me as an individual, SCN is also recognizing my Electrosonic colleagues and their present achievement in maintaining Electrosonic's reputation as an innovator in realizing and supporting AV systems."