

In Memoriam

John M. Eargle, AES fellow and honorary member, Bronze Medal winner, past president (1974-75), and recipient of the AES's Board of Governors Award, was found dead on May 9, in his home in Hollywood, California. The cause of death has not yet been determined. He is survived by his sister, Pauline Dahlgren, his brother, Robert Gray Eargle, and their children.

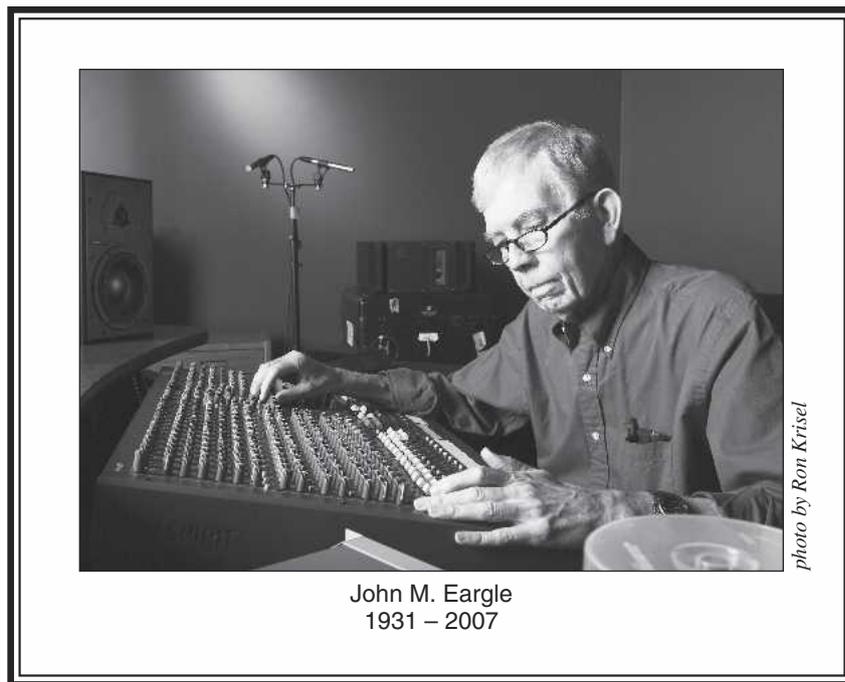
Born on January 6, 1931, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, John grew up in Texarkana, Arkansas, studying piano and playing both church organ and theater organ—his brother relates that he had perfect pitch. While in high school, he worked part-time for Paul Klipsch in nearby Hope, Arkansas.

John began undergraduate studies in music at North Texas University, receiving a bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music in 1953 and a master's in music from the University of Michigan in 1954. After military service, he earned a B.S. in electrical engineering from the University of Texas in 1963 and a master's degree from Cooper Union in 1970. He also studied acoustics with Cyril Harris at Columbia University.

John's multifaceted career included positions in engineering with RCA and Mercury Records in New York. While at Mercury, he experimented with matrixed surround sound. His interest in surround reproduction continued throughout his life.

After moving to Los Angeles in the early 1970s, he worked in engineering management for the Altec Corporation and then established the JME Consulting Corporation. One of his early consulting clients was JVC Corporation—he assisted them in developing and introducing CD-4, their entry into the quadraphonic sound format war, and coauthored several technical papers on CD-4 for the *JAES*.

In 1976, John joined JBL as vice president, product development for both consumer and professional loudspeakers and electronics. In the 1980s, he re-established his consulting prac-



John M. Eargle
1931 – 2007

photo by Ron Krisel

tice and was a consultant to JBL Professional and Harman International, JBL's parent company, until his death.

John and his colleague Mark Engbretsen made a major contribution to the revolution in cinema sound reproduction after 1980. Their paper for the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers demonstrated new concepts in cinema loudspeaker design, which led directly to developments culminating in the THX loudspeaker standards. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded them and Don Keele a Scientific and Technical Award (a Technical Oscar) in 2001 for their work. John was the electroacoustical consultant for the Academy's state-of-the-art Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills, California.

John engineered more than 250 CD releases, many for Delos Records, covering a wide spectrum of musical styles and ensembles in the USA and Europe, including the Seattle Symphony, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony, the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Westminster Choir, the chamber orchestras of Los Angeles, New York, and Moscow, and the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. Soloists he recorded included John

Browning, Arleen Auger, Janos Starker, Garrick Ohlsson, Carol Rosenberger, and Bella Davidovich. He was awarded a Best Classical Engineering Grammy in 2000 for his Delos recording of Dvorák's *Requiem* and *Symphony No. 9* performed by Zdenek Macal and the New Jersey Symphony.

A jazz aficionado, John engineered recordings by Joe Williams, Red Holloway, Ruth Brown, Clark Terry, Tommy Newsom, and Etta James. His recording of Joe Williams for Delos, titled *Nothin' But The Blues* won a Grammy in 1984 for Best Jazz Vocal Performance—male, and his recording of Ruth Brown for Fantasy Records, *Blues on Broadway*, won a 1989 Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Performance—female.

John was a fine musician, and although he did not perform publicly, a Bösendorfer Imperial piano was the central feature of his living room. For a short time, it shared space with its predecessor, a Steinway D.

A devoted educator, John was a frequent lecturer at universities, technical societies, and conferences. His books include *The Handbook of Recording Engineering*, *The Microphone Book*,

Handbook of Sound System Design, Electroacoustical Reference Data, The Loudspeaker Handbook, and Music, Sound, and Technology. His last book, completed just prior to his death, is *The JBL Story—60 Years of Audio Advancement*.

John was on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School and the Edgar Stanton Audio Recording Institute summer programs since 1980 and was an acting member of the Music Associates of Aspen's corporate board. He reviewed papers for the *JAES* and electroacoustical patents for the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* and wrote popular articles for *Audio Magazine*. In addition to his other skills, he was an accomplished computer graphic artist, creating all of the technical illustrations in his books, and, as technical book publishers abdicated their traditional design and layout functions, he became adept in preparing his manuscripts for publication. In recent years, he took up photography, with typically excellent results.

In addition to honors awarded to him by the AES and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, he was a fellow of the Acoustical Society of America. He was a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and a member of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, and the Hollywood Sapphire Group. John is listed in the 19th edition of *Who's Who in the West*. He was also a member of Tau Beta Pi and Eta Kappa Nu, honorary engineering societies.

John's generosity with his knowledge is legendary. He influenced countless engineers who heard him speak, learned from his teaching and his books, and had the privilege and pleasure of discussing audio engineering and music with him. The general public, while not knowing him, will continue to benefit from his contributions to recording arts and cinema sound reproduction. The magnitude of our loss is incalculable.

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