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PLANETARIUM IN BEDROOM

The number of Planetaria in this country could be counted on the fingers of one hand but a working Planetarium in an occupied bedroom must be unique and positively Pinteresque.

For the past two and a half years, 17 years old Peter Garrard has been constructing a Planetarium which now occupies some two-thirds of his bedroom at Flemming Avenue, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

At the age of 14, after a number of visits to the London Planetarium, Peter had an irrepressible urge to construct one for himself and settled down to designing the equipment to suit the space available.

The Planetarium comprises a dome in the form of a complete hemisphere 8'0" in diameter - this dimension being decided by the physical limitations of the bedroom - which reaches from floor to ceiling. The dome structure is of plywood framework lined with 121 pieces of white card all carefully fitted together. A typical landscape of houses, factories, trees and hills silhouetted against the skyline, lines the inner circle of the dome.

The projector, shaped like a dumb-bell some 4'6" long, is mounted on a structure designed so that electric motors give it motion in three directions. It comprises star and planet projectors with sundry projectors for nebulae, etc. and reference projectors to indicate the Meridian, the Ecliptic, the Precession circles and the position of the Poles. A separate motor driven projector gives the effect of a shower of meteors.

The unit is made up largely from secondhand or surplus materials from junk shops, with two 12" copper floats for the star globes. The drives are mainly standard meccano gearing and the lighting effects are produced by car and torch bulbs.

The whole project cost approximately £60 to construct.

The Planetarium is very versatile and can project the stars of both hemispheres, together with the planets, as they would be seen from any part of the earth's surface at any time. The motion of the stars and planets can be reproduced for thousands of years both in the past and future and the equipment's high degree of accuracy recommends it for educational work for those interested in astronomy.

Peter, dark haired and with the gift of lucid exposition, encouraged and helped by his Father a Professional Electrical Engineer, has always been interested in sound and music. He has won a number of Diplomas and Music Festival Awards, has installed an inter-communications system for the house and constructed a sound studio - also in his bedroom! He has recorded his own half-hour commentaries with musical effects for the Planetarium, which he built primarily to widen his study of the heavens, unhampered by the vagaries of climate, but he finds no lack of audiences for his demonstrations.

PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE.

A clipping of any item reproduced would be appreciated.

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