

# The John H. Potts Award

Why was the AES Gold Medal Award originally named after John H. Potts?

John H. Potts was the editor of "Audio Engineering" magazine (formerly "Radio" magazine) from its inception in 1948, and also its publisher in 1949, until his death in 1949 March. His obituary is in [Audio Engineering](#), Vol 33:4, pg 4 (1949 April), which you can read by [clicking here](#).

He contributed to the founding of the AES by giving the AES organizers visibility in his magazine by publishing reports on the AES-to-be, before the AES had its own Journal, or anybody had even thought of the web. In 1949, the AES established the John H. Potts Memorial Award "for outstanding achievement in the field of audio engineering," named for the late editor of Audio Engineering Magazine. To learn more about John H. Potts or the founding of the AES, visit the [History of the Audio Engineering Society](#).

From the book [\*Chasing Sound: Technology, Culture, and the Art of Studio Recording from Edison to the LP\*](#), Susan Schmidt Horning writes:

The term audio engineering was a relatively new one in the postwar period, so new that there was no publication devoted to it until 1947. Early that year, Radio magazine announced that it would be changing its name and focus to Audio Engineering, starting with the May issue. "Because there has been no technical magazine devoted solely to this field," explained editor John H. Potts, "all engineers interested in audio engineering have had to gather piecemeal, from a large number of sources, such information on the subject as is published." Potts, an electronics pioneer, author of technical articles, and an engineer for RCA, General Electric, Westinghouse, and Sperry, knew well what literature was available. He knew that recording received little attention in the professional technical literature, and he vowed to place special editorial emphasis on it in the pages of Audio Engineering, securing the most prominent chief engineers in recording and broadcasting for his editorial advisory board. The need for standardization had become particularly acute, with different record labels employing different crossover frequencies, different degrees of pre-emphasis at the higher frequencies, varying groove depth, and other factors that affected reproduction. Even the best reproducing equipment could not play all records satisfactorily. By providing a forum for the interchange of ideas, Potts hoped "to be able to contribute in some measure to eventual standardization of these varying techniques."