

CX

MONTHLY TECH NEWS
For Entertainment and Broadcast

CX 69, APRIL 2012 . \$5.50

No Divas at Waterworld
La Traviata in Sydney

Rod Stewart live
Rocks rudest soundguy

Jon English
Old black eyes is back

Pic by Lisa Tomasetti

ISSN 1320-5595



9 771320 559004

REVIEWED:

Go Case drawers case / Sennheiser XS wireless / Midas Pro2C console / BMS wireless HD camera / MA on PC Command Wing

NEWS AND VIEWS:

Yamaha launch CL / Training in trouble / Stage & Studio depart / Resolution X powers up / New LPA column

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PRODUCTION MUSEUM

I had a dream about this. Now I want someone to gift our industry enough to build a production museum. It would have space to show historical equipment, pictures and a small video screening room – 20 seats, so school groups could come through. Back of house storage and a proper workshop, with funds to employ a full time restorer/display dude. If this is your bequest, please leave enough for establishment of a foundation to run it, and preferably buy or gift a building in one of the capital cities. I think \$3m would be a good start, then \$350k per year. Thank you for your generosity!

LPA SMELL TROUBLE

Industry association Live Performance Australia identifies a looming problem that affects you in their inaugural column in this issue. LPA have really reached out to the live production industry this year. They sent David Hamilton, Director of Workplace Relations around Australia to speak at every CX Roadshow in the Outdoor Stage Safety seminar. With over 300 members, 10 staff and a history stretching back to 1917, this peak industry association is the one to join if you run a production firm or supply services to the live performance industry.

ACETA STUDY SIZE

Likewise on the distribution and manufacturer side of the industry, peak industry association ACETA are crunching the numbers to better understand what our industry is worth to the national economy of Australia. Their column in this issue lays bare the overall monetary sectors and also spells out why our industry is hard to characterize, from a Government perspective. Now more than ever, you need to join your peak industry association (whether LPA or ACETA), so you have a voice. Together we prosper, divided we fail.

CX EDITORIAL**INSOLVENCY PLAGUE**

Maybe it was the CX Dirty Money seminar at the Roadshow, but now we seem to have more notifications of failed firms and bad debts than ever before. Our legal advisor says the top end of town are tighter than ever, accountants and lawyers are having difficulty getting paid on time. The Dirty Money seminars inevitably finished with stories of rogue or inept firms not paying, or paying very late. The most common sentiment was 'we are great technicians and lousy managers'. This has seeded a Business Column which starts in this issue.

YOUNG GUNS

Until we sold ENTECH in 2004 we had the best database, fuelled by attendee data. Having returned to the industry meeting business with our CX Roadshow, we are back in the data business. Now we are comparing whom we know against those we don't, and straight away see a healthy number of new folk: operators, technicians, designers and business owners. As long as new people enter, our industry is healthy. Getting out and meeting with you on the Roadshow was the best thing CX could have done. See you in 2013!

- Julius

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CX Magazine is published in Australia by Juliusmedia Group Pty Ltd, under license from CX Network Pty Ltd

Juliusmedia Group ACN 134170460
CX Network ACN 153165167

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Layout design: NEOWerk
Nadia Hidalgo / Karla Espinosa

Printer: Bright Print Group

Distribution: Fairfax

CX-TV hosts: Meg Mackintosh
and Sophie Pearson

CX-TV camera: Dribbles

CX-TV is at www.cx-tv.com

Coffee: Rob Forsyth

Happy hour: Concourse Bar

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Official airline: Virgin Australia

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NEWS

α INDUSTRY NEWS



Yamaha gets it right with CL launch

Meeting expectations after long wait

Frankfurt's Musik Messe trade-show was ground zero for Yamaha's chance to regain its crown as leading digital audio maker. With 25 years in the business, the big Japanese firm appeared to go quiet after the launch of the M7CL a whole seven years ago.

CL has restored the faith, with users enthusiastic about its commonality with M7CL and PM5D, which was launched almost a decade ago. Until recent times, these were both segment leaders.

The new console is a family; CL 1, CL 3 and CL 5 all do the same mission, they just have different fader counts. Now audio is remote – M7CL and PM5D were transitional, with onboard audio processing and connections. Now we expect to Cat 5 off to a remote rack.

Yamaha go better, the Audinate Dante architecture allows multiple console surfaces and I/O racks to be distributed through a venue. CL arrives out of the box as a network solution, connected together using regular Ethernet hardware and not requiring an external computer. Dante has a secondary path for redundancy.

Two new I/O boxes feature in the CL range, and the top of the line surface (CL5) with 2 new I/O boxes allowing 64 in and 32 analogue out will likely sell at under \$40k.

This combo is close to shipping, while the smaller surfaces will ship August. The starting system price is said to be around \$30k.

Aside from all-new audio DSP, the CL has a growing cluster of third-party 'plug-ins' for the effects rack, including a Neve Portico EC and limiter; plus some cheeky classic emulations of dbx, TLA and Urei devices. Yamaha's Jason Allen says the whole 'plug-in' issue is often overblown – and that Yamaha have the measure of what is needed.

Finally the now mandatory live recording functionality is nailed; with output via the

built-in Dante connection to any ASIO-compatible DAW and enhanced with extra features if using Steinberg Nuendo Live.

Watch for a CL review in Gearbox as soon as we can.



• Training sessions: subscribe to the newsletter at www.yamahamusic.com.au/ca

Roadshow to return in 2013

Industry enjoys format



We find Australia's Smartest Tech!

Despite the rivers of free beer (CX spent 9 grand shouting you drinks), many brave technical types attempted the Tech Quiz during happy hour at the Roadshow. Each person answered 18 multiple choice questions ranging across sound, staging, lighting and vision. Two audio tones were played, requiring identification. Three Rosco lighting gels were shown, with the name or number the correct answer.

Of 23 possible correct answers, the winner made 20. He is Ben Morris from Microhire in Brisbane, and clearly deserves a pay rise from his boss Russell Bennett.

Runners up, in no particular order were Sydney: Wayne D'Chong, Melbourne: Len Phillips, Adelaide: Chris Stedman and Perth: Andrew Symons.

Ben Morris is Australia's smartest tech! Pictured with Jimmy Den Ouden.



Amazing what can be built in just three hours! LSC had it down to a fine art.

Iraqi Fred delivers the Roadshow. Dawn in Adelaide.

Having delivered a one day 'pop-up' tradeshow to five capital cities this summer, the CX Roadshow attracted over 1,300 industry types with positive results. Almost 200 attended the CX Outdoor Stage safety seminar, one of over 20 events attached to the Roadshow.

Visitors liked the convenience. "Just got back to Mackay. Great show, good exhibitors, good information at seminars and all over in one day", said Dale Kennedy. Exhibitors also appreciated the efficiency "Congratulations on a great show. I felt it was really worthwhile. Organized with the pre-

cursor of a German band", said Miles Jackson, Asia Pacific Sales Manager for QSC.

Around 13 firms have committed to the 2013 CX Roadshow, which will run slightly earlier in February to avoid the silly season in Adelaide and Perth. The 2013 event will also take in Carberra, for a total of six cities. The 2013 Roadshow will debut loud and bright demonstrations alongside even more seminars and sessions, with seven breakout rooms booked at each venue.

A smaller CX Tech Tour of regional performing arts centres is on the cards for later in 2013, subject to sufficient support from the trade.





WOMAD Prolyte Arc Roof system – pic by Tony Lewis

WOMADelaide's Prolyte Stages Best practice with properly engineered solution

Last issue CX reported on industry wide concerns about grey market copy stage roof systems. Unfortunately we used the recent acquisition of several stage roof systems by WOMADelaide as an example within the article.

WOMADelaide were disappointed at the use of their excellent name in a story about high risk counterfeited stage systems and dubious origin acquisition and contacted CX inviting us to look closer in to the acquisition and process used to implement the safe construction of the new roof systems.

CX should never have named WOMADelaide in the story, as the purchase and execution of their new Prolyte Group stage roofing systems has been a textbook example of how to do it correctly.

WOMADelaide carefully researched and considered their needs as a mature and significant event of international standing. Having delivered highly acclaimed events since 1997, this independent organisation has produced safe and successful events

time and time again with many difficult and challenging installations, results in an event that the often critical arts media consistently rates as 'world class'. WOMADelaide is considered to 'punch beyond its weight', and is a crucial cornerstone of the South Australian tourism industry.

WOMADelaide also made possible for all its roof installation crew to be trained in the deployment of the equipment by Prolyte importers, Specialised Stage Engineering.

Prolyte was used as a 'best example' of a reputedly engineered stage roof system during the CX Stage Safety seminar tour last month. During that seminar, we lauded the engineering manuals and integrity of Prolyte specifically.

For those curious how such an unintended error can occur within the pages of your magazine, this is a rare incident. CX takes editorial integrity very seriously, and unreservedly apologises to WOMADelaide Arts Projects Australia and to Prolyte's Australian importers Specialised Stage Engineering for the unintended error.

Bytes and bits

Next Billy soldiers on

Billy Mawer's Next Entertainment went down in February owing creditors \$1.2 million, but the business continues as Next Distribution. Distributing a few pro audio lines, the business had its origins in NET that was born from the closure of Greater Union Entertainment Technology around ten years ago. NET itself was the subject of a financial reorganisation - which left at least one stakeholder claiming substantial losses.

Australian Music Group refinances

Musiclink Australia, Allans Music and Billy Hyde as part of AMG will be recapitalised by Revere Capital. The injection of unspecified funds will allow restructuring of bank debt, and follows cost reductions in the retail stores. They say no other 'radical' changes are planned, and some positive announcements will follow regarding new wholesale agencies for Musiclink and longer term branding of the retail stores and online business.

Departure Lounge: CX farewells John Berrett and Vince Lovegrove

John (Beryl) Berrett was The Australian Ballet's Electrician until his untimely passing via a heart attack. "John was widely regarded to be one of the kindest, gentlest souls in the industry. There was no length that John wouldn't go to make sure 'the show went on'. He touched many lives and lit countless shows and will be sorely missed by all those who knew him", says the ALIA website.

Vince Lovegrove was a musician, band manager, and author. As a rock manager in the early 1980s, Lovegrove pulled off a coup by taking Sydney band the Divinyls to the US and scoring the virtual unknown outfit a recording deal, paving the way for the group's international success. Vince died after he rolled his Kombi Van near Byron Bay.

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Bytes and bits

▶ Norwest scale up L'Acoustics

Norwest Productions have updated their inventory of VDosc and Kudo, with L'Acoustic announcing they are now the largest holder of Kudo in the world. The firm now holds 180 Kudo and over 100 VDosc, spread between Brisbane, Melbourne and Auckland.

▶ Sony tape is back

Sony Professional Media is pleased to announce it is once again able to offer customers a full range of media including Betacam SR, Digital Betacam, XDCAM Professional Disc, SXS & LTO. "We apologise to our customers and thank them for their patience following the tsunami in Japan, which forced the closure of our factories. We can now provide customers with a complete range of product as our Australian and New Zealand operations return to full stock levels," said Luke Simpson, National Sales Manager for Sony, Broadcast and Production.

▶ Tamworth Country Music Awards

Norwest Productions and Event Services won the tender to provide full-production for the 40th Country Music Awards in Tamworth on 28th January 2012. This included lighting, stage set, audio, live vision and crewing at the Tamworth Regional Entertainment Centre. This was the first year both 'Country Theatre' which runs the week leading up to the awards and the Country Music Awards were held on the same stage. Two designs were called for, one for intimate mode in theatre style and one in full-lyric mode for the awards. Live vision was directed by Robert Crawford with Chris Irvine calling cameras. Audio legend Ernie Rose produced a great mix at FOH for Norwest Productions, which was managed by Ray Moss and his team from Brisbane. Richard Neville programmed and operated the lights.



A lighting gig so complicated he needs everything he has to operate it.....

Theatre producer owes \$1.4m

Melbourne based theatre producer Simon Myers has placed his firm Bold Jack Pty Ltd into voluntary liquidation, along with Folsom Prison Productions.

Creditors collectively owed a reputed \$1.4 million include Outlook Communications. Managing Director Greg Ginger told CX his firm supplied sound production equipment for shows such as The John Denver Story, The Ultimate Rock & Roll Jam Session, E/A – Tales from the life of Eva Cassidy, The

Man in Black, Doris Day – So Much More Than The Girl Next Door, and Bon Scott – Hell Ain't a Bad Place To Be.

A forthcoming Johnny Cash tribute show, The Man in Black, starring Tex Perkins is scheduled for the Sydney Opera House this month, and Myers denies he is now anything other than an employee of an entity called Bold Jack International Pty Ltd. Tex Perkins has distanced himself from Myers, and says the show will be a success.

80,000 punters for free Perth gig

Perth Council approved a show by Jean Michel Jarre to be held beside the Swan River at Langley Park in November. Promoted by Maryanne Bell's ITM Productions, the show has no government funding at presstime. ITM say that the show will be free, except for 8,000 VIP tickets.

Jarre holds several world records for large outdoor concert audiences – the largest being when he played for an audience of 3.5 million people to celebrate the 850th birthday of Moscow.

It remains to be seen how the concert will be funded, and by whom. Costs estimates run as high as ten million dollars.



ALWAYS here to help, CX feel compelled to share our latest new i-thing, non other than the iPhone4 bottle opener case. We have tested this down to 12 bottles, but could not get the 13th opened. At all. So we need a new journalist, one who can REALLY drink beer.....

SHARPY

5 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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DO NOT ACCEPT IMITATIONS!

To all lighting industry stakeholders

CLAY PAKY S.p.A. has become aware of some attempts to market products, primarily manufactured in China, which appear to be copies of CLAY PAKY's SHARPY spotlight.

CLAY PAKY commits significant resources to ongoing research and development to create new products such as the SHARPY spotlight. Besides being original designs, these products bring about innovations that benefit all lighting industry stakeholders.

In order to protect its innovations, CLAY PAKY systematically invests in intellectual property.

Please note in particular that: CLAY PAKY S.p.A. is the owner of registered Community design N° 1234009-00, which protects the SHARPY spotlight in all EU countries. The same design has also been protected in China (201130039967.8) and the USA (US 25,387.114)

CLAY PAKY S.p.A. has filed patent applications to protect the technology used in the SHARPY spotlight in China, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the USA.

It is important to be aware that it is not only those that manufacture copies of products, covered by exclusive rights, that are punishable by law but also those who import and distribute such copies.

CLAY PAKY S.p.A. will proceed with appropriate actions with the relevant authorities in all countries where its intellectual property is registered in order to protect its proprietary rights and hinder those who, by manufacturing and selling counterfeit products, not only harm CLAY PAKY S.p.A. but also hinder progress in the industry as a whole.



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Exit Stage Left

Stage and Studio Depart Graciously

SYDNEY LOSES one of very few specialised suppliers for the stage industry. CX went to find out what happened.....

For almost twenty years Stage and Studio have supplied schools and theatre clients from Sydney's Artarmon. Everything from audio, drapes to lighting, with a healthy dose of Rosco gels and robust rigging bits sourced from all over.

Now the trio, Frances Taylor, Gillian Hawke and Chris Roarty have called it a day. CX visited while Frances and Gillian were packing up the showroom – Chris was laid up in hospital on a drip, suspected of having ingested some rat droppings amongst his hoard of old stock at the back of the premises.

"We could have kept going, it was more a personal decision", Frances told CX. "We haven't gone down, we haven't failed".

Far from it – the firm has a most excellent reputation on all sides of the ledger – suppliers love how they always paid on time; customers loved how the right equipment for the job was specified.

Stage and Studio picked up where Strand left off. After a few years at Startec, a short lived company that picked up the Strand business, Frances and team established their business back in the suburb where Strand ruled in its heyday.

"In principle not a lot has changed – schools still need lights, curtains and audio. But the funding has shrunk, the parents and citizen committees have less money these days. Everyone expected the BER (Building the Education Revolution) money would be a fortune, but it wasn't."

"But we've done things the way we wanted to – and no two days were the same,



Tributes

- We are very sad that Stage & Studio are closing. The industry is poorer. Chookas, friends, for whatever ventures might follow.

- Adam P. Smith, Rosco Aust

- It has been a pleasure working with these true professionals, both in the quality of their installations and customer service.

- Don McConnell, Audio Division Manager, Hills SVL

- Knowledgeable, skillful and honest they always undertook everything with good humour and a genuine concern for their customers. We can ill afford to lose people of this quality. I'll miss em heaps.

- Tim Kennard, Jands

- The team at Stage and Studio were always willing to go the extra mile and they certainly have developed a rapport with their customers. Their prompt and efficient service combined with their knowledge and skill will be sorely missed.

- Sean Clarke, Technical Coordinator, Riverside Theatres

which was nice."

They picked the eye teeth of every product range to find what they considered the most suitable for a job. "We made our own lighting bar extrusion, it is tough, so you can't wind a hook clamp into it. The hook clamps we sold, they came from Melbourne. They're butch. It's the Strand mentality I guess, we wanted things to be well engineered. To hang them up and never have them come down."

Frances says they preferred Jands dimmers, Hills SVL audio products and Rosco fog machines and fluid. "I remember Aida outdoors a long time ago and a bunch of the singers came down with a throat problem. They analyzed the fog fluid and eliminated it as a problem. That stuck with me", says Frances.

As to control, the latest favorite is the ETC Smart Fade. "Simple, with an excellent online tutorial and of course very solid".

So off they go – Frances says health and family matter most at this stage. Gillian is eyeing off a part time job at Bunnings. And Chris is struggling to get his health back, after the phantom rats of Hotham Parade tried to get him.

"It's been nice. A great time!"



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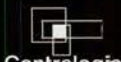
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OR SCAN THIS >



Toss the dice with training

The stakes are higher than you think

DURING THE CX ROADSHOW, I presented Seven Things that might be conversation starters. One of them – “Knowledge Leakage” – got more comment and attention than any of the arcane techy items.

Everyone tells me that we’ve got training and learning wrong. So we approach a solution... how?



T

ime to suspend belief, while I do two unusual things: present this piece backwards, and be serious. Seriously.

My big ask, normally a conclusion rather than a beginning, starts here: if you're involved with Live Production and you're a manager, team leader, supervisor, owner, producer, or any other role in which you run things and shape the business, here's an opportunity that you only get once every ten years. The vocational training industry wants you to say what's important. If you want any sort of meaningful training to exist for this industry, you need to be part of shaping the training agenda, and you'd better tell the education system what you need to help your business work. Before they serve up what they think you want, which probably isn't what you want.

This process won't be painful, and I'll explain what you need to know as we go.

ACT 1



This year, the very basis for training in Live Production is being reviewed. The people doing that need your input for a major rejig of the Training Package that you might know as CUE03, the thing that incorporates all the qualifications for “Live Production, Theatre and Events”. A series of rolling industry consults is running now, and you still have time to register for Industry Workshops to be held in April in Brisbane (16th), Sydney (17th), Hobart (18th) and Melbourne (19th). A link to the details is at

BY: JOHN MAIZELS

the end of this story.

Angela Murray, who is leading the work on the CUE review, knows that many of the review participants will be from “the training system”, and they will have important input. But she says what the process really needs is input from the people who do the jobs and most likely have nothing to do with the training process. That's you. She told me that the workshops WILL be practitioner-friendly. “We're inviting people to participate. The [workshop] agenda is structured so that industry practitioners can come at the beginning, and talk about what they see as the skill needs. Turn up and don't be intimidated by the process. Have a say”. Once you've connected with the process, the review team will guide you through the maze of buzzwords and TLAs so that you can concentrate on what's really important to industry: get the requirements correct. The review team will connect your feedback to the training package.

Murray pleads for your participation. “The Vocational Sector is highly challenged in getting employers and employees engaged at the level that is needed”. She told me that employers in other sectors are often critical of those who deliver training, citing that trainers have insufficient experience. But she says that one thing which really stands out about Live Production training is the number of trainers who are also solidly employed in the industry.

The review workshop in each city will consider basic questions: what skills do you need to run your business now and over the next ten years, what needs to be changed from what is being taught now, how do we ensure continued relevance between now and the next major review?

Well, there's the hook. The people who deliver vocational training for the Entertainment Industry get their direction from the CUE training package. In fact, they can only teach what's defined in the training package. So... if the input is wrong, then the outcome will be wrong. Got it?

Anyone who works in VET will tell you that the jargon is a killer. Um... yes, VET is a TLA (and TLA is “Three Letter Acronym”, a TLA). Start here: Vocational Education and Training. Check the Wikipedia article on “Vocational Education” which explains it. Vocations are “doing-jobs” as opposed to Professions, which are “critical-thinking” jobs. Don't be offended by those terms, it's the jargon that everyone uses. And frequently the differentiation is not a hard line.

A training organisation that seeks to teach a vocational course in Australia, and award a nationally recognised qualification such as a Certificate or Diploma, has to jump through certain hoops. Being “Registered” is one of those, which is how we get to have Registered Training Organisations or RTOs.

Continued Page 52

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New RODE design studio

CX ATTENDED THE OPENING of Peter and Lou Freedman's RØDE Microphones design studio in Sydney. RØDE Microphones has made the bold move of setting up a design studio in the epicentre of design, Sydney's Surry Hills, to immerse their existing designers and encourage a new breed to join the team.



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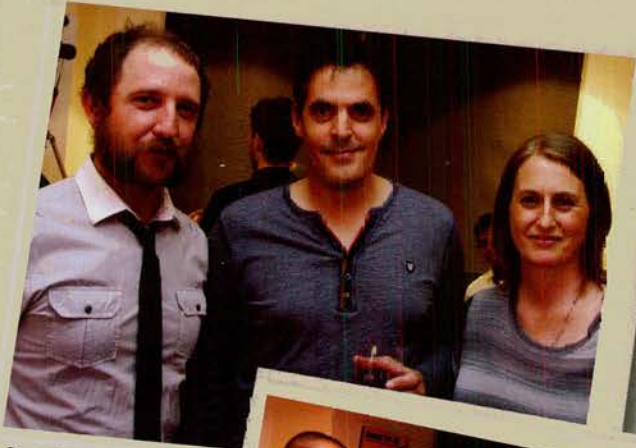
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No Divas at Waterworld

La Traviata – Handa opera on Sydney harbor



Through the floorboards under the stage you glimpse the sea. Over near the stage right goal post PA and lighting tower is a life guard. Crew are wearing life jackets. Welcome to Opera Australia's La Traviata, with a beautiful sloping stage built on piles driven into the seabed.

A whole thirty metres either side of stage centre are 'goal post' towers carrying sound and lighting. At sixty metres apart, these are almost at the extreme sides of the audience grandstand. This produces some tricky audio challenges.

The audience area is built over the foreshore, with raked seating for 3,000 and

of chrome movers.

The original design has been delivered – the chandelier suspended on a remote controlled building crane, with an emergency landing barge behind the stage in case it needs to drop when the winds rise. The emergency plan calls for the crane to weathercock, freewheeling in the wind. The vertical ladder of moving lights slung off the crane are unplugged, so the cable looms don't get tangled and ripped.

Huge construction

Many piles were driven into the harbor floor, just off the sea wall. The stage frame-

Each of the goal post towers at either side of the stage are supported by just two piles, with a tower atop each that is joined by a gantry at the top. It looks impossible, especially with a line array and a follow spot tent off the front, and a stack of moving lights on trusses.

A floating walkway and jetty connects the stage to the main land, where a grandstand for 3,000 is built against the hill. Off to the northern end is a three story dining and hospitality pavilion, lavishly decorated and carpeted. At the south end, a more basic food and beverage area is built.

At the top centre, FOH for lighting and audio, plus followspots and more lighting

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two VIP 'experience' areas – one to the North a custom built three level restaurant bar facility that will be unbolted and stored away until next year.

Opera Australia have taken a large risk, but thanks to the major sponsor Harushia Handa (\$3 million) and the NSW Government (\$6 million for three years) the beautiful production was built from the sea floor up.

Brian Thompson designed a sloped stage that resembles a gilt edged mirror. Cleverly the steps at the top hinge out, so stagehands can reveal furniture like a couch. A bed rises from a trap downstage right. But the star of the show is the 9 metre tall chandelier, loaded with crystals and a circle

work was lowered on with cranes, and the floor above bolted in. Under the stage is the orchestra studio, and dressing rooms. It is a strange world of scaffold and plywood, tech equipment all carefully covered in plastic every night, since the structure could not be designed waterproof.

On the stage itself, a safety fence will prevent free falling performers or crew entering the water – and the slope is a challenge. In the wet, it is positively slippery, which will provide challenges since the Sydney season has never been wetter. The show is scheduled to run in the rain, wind and major weather the only show stoppers. In any case, the audience ticket details say a 50 minute weather break can be called.

positions are atop a tower.

The harbourside park hosts the site for almost two months, with the opera itself running 18 shows, 2 previews with up to 5 rain dates allocated.

Foldback

Opera singers do not use stage monitors, nor microphones. But they do here, since an outdoor stage for 3,000 is very unlike an acoustically designed opera theatre.

Several weeks of rehearsals allowed the performers familiarity with in-ear monitors, the 12 principals had custom moulds by Ear Monitors Australia and the 40 chorus rely on Shure SE115 earphones.



La Traviata

Norwest Productions supplied the audio, Riedel did the communications, and Chameleon the lights. Setup was smashed by wet weather, but the season started with blue skies.

The Australian Opera costume department then had to deal with not one but three separate wireless packs – one for the in-ear's, and two for the microphones. Adrian Riddell from audio contractor Norwest Productions explained that a main and a backup system are used for each principal.

Originally the DPA 4088 cardioid was to be the main system, with a DPA 4060 omni directional lapel mounted on the same miniature boom arm. Together these tiny head worn microphones and their two wireless transmitter packs would ensure reliability.

"We ended up using the omni directional as the main system", said monitor engineer John Watterson. "The omni gave better performance in the wind, since they are vented all around and the wind seems to blow through. With the cardioid, the wind gets caught up in there".

Complex audio

John Watterson is an elite sound engineer, able to follow a musical score ("Piano since there are less pages to turn") and mix an impossible number of sends on a Digico D5T console (left). Making opera singers comfortable for the first time with in-ears, and then delivering what a 40 piece orchestra require through their headphones is no task for an ordinary monitor engineer.

In all he has 16 mono and 12 stereo auxiliary send, with 8 mono and 8 stereo groups. He built mixes down on pages, so a cluster of viola's were sent to a group. This way he could send groups of mixes to the orchestra studio, where fortunately the musicians did their own levels on 28 Aviom personal mixers. "If there was a musician who hadn't used one before, they were seated with someone who had, as most were sharing an Aviom", John explained.

Because of the way he designed the mix



matrix, an individual instrument or a group of instruments or singers could be quickly adjusted. The chorus went out in four sends, arranged into soprano, mezzo, tenor and bass groups.

Just in case, four sends went to wedges downstage, at the wings and on the back of the stage. These covered anyone who abandoned their ear monitors.

Opera Australia supplied two mic wranglers, who fitted the performers. The costume department customized some slings to hold the three packs in whatever place was convenient within the ornate and elaborate costumes.

The backstage routine involved the performers coming to John once they were fitted, to have a listen to their mixes. Then he had them go stand next to a small speaker mounted on a wall, which generated a sweep tone. The two microphones on each principal performer were then split into a Rational Acoustics Smart 7 sound system measurement system, so that Norwest could check that each of the two DPA microphones was performing to specification.

"You could have sweat, or makeup interfere and be down five dB without knowing straight away. This Smart trace shows quickly what is happening", John explained.

"You'll be pleased to know that the performers have been very cooperative", he concluded.



ADRIAN RIDDELL
was the account manager for Norwest

60+ Wireless Channels

"We won't be able to do a show this way after the RF selloff", commented Adrian Riddell. "We reached the limit of premium and robust signals out here", added John Watterson. Norwest worked closely with Riedel who provided the communications system. Norwest's Steve Caldwell monitored and measured frequency spectrum.

"There are over 60 RF channels in use, consisting of 45 channels of Shure UR series radio mic in use spread across two adjoining bands", Steve Caldwell told CX. "Then there are 16 transmit channels of Sennheiser IEM furnishing 52 receive packs. All radio mic receivers are fed from a single pair of newly released

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Cast and creative for La Traviata

Conductor:
 Brian Castles-Onion
 Stage Director:
 Francesca Zambello
 Set Designer: Brian Thomson
 Costume Designer: Tess Schofield
 Lighting Designer: John Rayment
 Lighting Supplier: Chameleon
 Sound Designer: Tony David Cray
 Choreographer: Stephen Baynes

Norwest Productions/OA Audio
 Staff
 Account Manager: Adrian Riddell
 Project Manager:
 Matthew Whitehead
 Monitor Engineer: John Watterson
 FOH Mix Assistant: Ian Cooper
 RF Engineer: Steve Caldwell
 Patch Engineer: Dane Cook
 Audio Assistant: Randolph Smith
 OA Mic Wrangler: Alison Bremner
 OA Mic Wrangler: Liam McKeown



La Traviata

Dual DPA microphones on one boom
 allowed Tony David Cray to select the
 better sounding solution

high-performance tapered helical antennas from RFVenue in the states, and IEM transmitters are fed through two custom weatherproof stainless log-periodic antennas. Both antenna systems have been designed to withstand the salt water, and outdoor weather conditions. The system is monitored closely during all performances

due to the somewhat hostile RF environment in this area".

"Outdoors with no reflective surfaces, if we don't capture wireless in line of sight, we lose the signal", added John.

Another complexity was that with all its capability assigned to 128 inputs and 72 buses, the D5 had no internal equalizer or effects DSP engine capability. These were done on outboard, with Lexicon reverbs for ear monitor sends.

All this before we talk about front of house – the sound delivered to the paying

audience. Australian Opera designer and engineer Tony David Cray specified a system which Norwest Productions then delivered after a tight bidding contest with several other providers.

A main line array of Adamson Y18 and Y10 boxes flew from the left and the right goal post towers. Directional cardioid subwoofers were positioned on a deck down near the water, to deliver the low end to the audience not the mansions on the other side of the harbor.

Three days to EQ

Because the towers were so far apart, clever design was required. A stack of three Y18 boxes was positioned just off each side of the stage, on a cantilevered arrangement of truss and pipe. "Original y there were decks there for broadcast jibs and cameras, but they didn't originate", says Adrian.

The show was mixed in stereo, so the arrangement went audio left (main tower south), audio right (three Y18's at stage side), then audio left again for the three Y18's off the right side of the stage, and audio right for the main tower north.

Infill for the middle front were delivered by four pairs of Y10 boxes, in a left/right arrangement in front of the stage.

A pair of subwoofers were positioned in front of the sea wall, and time delayed. These had to be struck at the end of each performance, since the walkway in front of the sea wall had to be available to the public in daylight hours.

Norwest spent three days testing, commissioning, equalizing and time aligning the system. As you can imagine, the arrival times and the relative levels of the various sources relative to the 3,000 seats provided a complex challenge.

Live mixing of orchestra and opera is a very exact science, with a highly articulate and discerning audience.

Then the reviews came in

'A breath of fresh air for opera' said Murray Black in The Australian. 'In open-air performances, sound quality is a key issue as poorly blended amplification can single-handedly ruin the occasion. Here, sound designer Tony David Cray and his team pulled off a coup with their well-balanced sound engineering. The vocal lines rang forth with clarity and definition.'

'Aria alfresco' writes Elissa Blake in SMH. 'The sound quality is surprisingly good, mixed as it is with the occasional hoot of a ferry and the lapping of the water.'

'Bellissimo! Handa Opera's La Traviata on Sydney's waterfront a big success', according to Jo Litson in The Sunday Telegraph. 'Brian Castles-Onion conducts the orchestra, which like the singers is amplified but the sound is true and clear. All in all, it's a massive undertaking - which OA has pulled off magnificently.'

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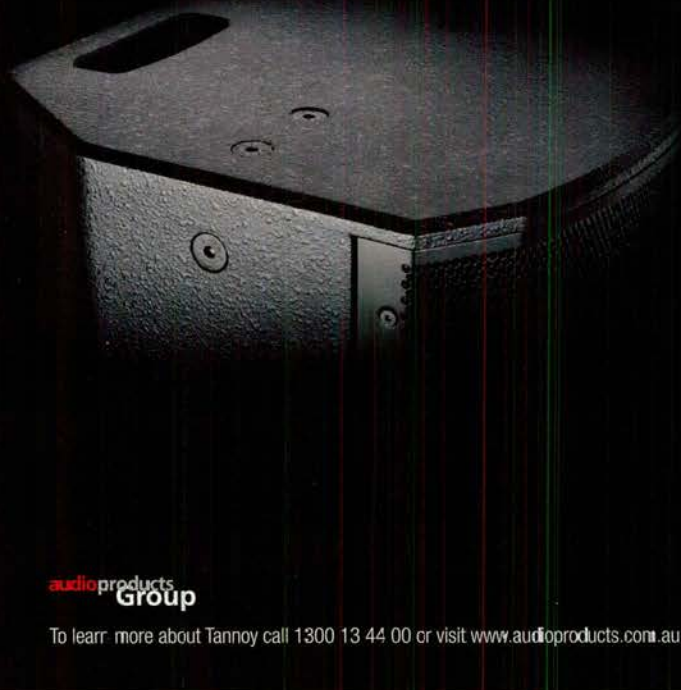
17 SEPTEMBER 2011

saw doors open on one of the newest and most impressive venues in Sydney. Six months later, The Concourse at Chatswood has certainly found its feet.

In the mid 1990s Willoughby Council decided they wanted a community facility to replace the aging Town Hall and Bailey Hall. Though built in 1972, these buildings were no longer able to keep up with the needs of the rapidly expanding local community. Architectural plans were completed in 2007, and the Town Hall and Bailey Hall demolished in 2008 to make way for a new civic centre. Council forked out 173 million or so dollars, and 4 years on The Concourse at Chatswood is a reality.



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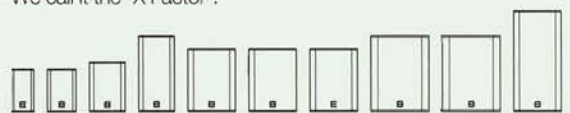


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From upstage in the Theatre looking out



1 of the 42 motorised fly bars in the Theatre



Concert Hall PA Racks

Theatre Fly System - the cupboard on the wall is the brain



The Concourse was designed to be more than just a venue. It's a precinct which occupies nearly a whole suburban block and boasts not only venues but restaurants, carpark, corporate spaces, retail stores, outdoor areas, and the second largest library in NSW. Technical Manager Simon Koenig took CX for a tour of his venue.

The Performing Arts Centre at The Concourse includes several small spaces which cater for corporate functions for anything from 20 to 50 people. The Civic Pavilion is the largest of the function areas, and can be split into two spaces to accommodate 150 or 300 people. Integrated lighting bars and circuits are permanently installed, and in house mobile staging and small PA systems brought in as required.

A permanent in-ceiling system caters for basic PA such as lectern microphones. There's a full size industrial kitchen located behind the Civic Pavilion which is used by external caterers, and beverage service is handled in house.

The Theatre

The Theatre is the next largest space in the venue, with a capacity of 500. Tiered seating and a gallery level provide great sight lines

to the stage, which is one of the most comprehensively equipped I've ever seen. In house lighting includes a selection of fixtures from PRG, with JANDS HPC Air Gap dimmers and ETC EOS console. In house audio is a single Martin W8 line array system, and as far as I could tell is the only thing in the entire building on a manual winch. The LX inventory includes LED fixtures too – Simon says "We've got the new Selecon PL3 LEDs which have been fantastic. We're just waiting for the barndoor kits to come in for those, but they're proving to be an amazing fixture".

Talking of winches, the theatre has quite a few of those too. 40 motorised fly lines plus 2 motorised pan bars occupy the full height fly tower, with the motors spread across two winch rooms (one each side of stage). The fly system is nothing short of extremely impressive. Each bar

is rated to 500kg, and at this load they travel at up to 0.5m/s. For loads under 250kg the maximum speed is increased to 1.5m/s. Up to 20 lines can be simultaneously operated from the custom built Jands fly console, which can hold multiple cues and shows. A diagnostics panel on the rack adjacent to the SM console shows status for each motor, and if an emergency stop has been activated it can tell you which one. Each fly line has weight sensors, and will detect slack lines too. I was given a demo of the system and it's dead quiet, plus has position recall accurate to 1mm. Yep, 1mm. Simon explained that unlike a manual fly system, the operator can't always see the elements moving if they're stuck in one position. The fly console can be relocated

either side of the stage, either at stage level or on the fly floor. Individual bars can be locked out manually with a padlock, and password protection controls things like dead stops.

The bio box in the theatre has a clear line of sight not only to the stage, but also to the PA. This means it's possible to pull a decent audio mix from the bio box – not always the case in theatres! The in house console is an Allen & Heath iDR based iLive T112. Analogue ties

from the stage to the control room enable other consoles to be used. The theatre has a comprehensive data distribution network, with data, DMX points, and talk-back outlets just about everywhere. There are even points in the box booms.

Access into the theatre is excellent – the adjacent loading dock will happily accommodate a semitrailer, and it is equipped with a leveler allowing gear to be wheeled all the way. The backstage area is capacious and well thought out. Dressing rooms in the venue are well appointed, and all equipped with disabled toilet facilities. Accessibility was a key consideration for council, not only for patrons but performers. Signs throughout the building are also in Braille, hearing aid loops are in the performance spaces and also exist for foyer paging systems, and wheelchair lifts allow access not only to

....IN THE tour it became pretty obvious that a huge amount of thought has gone into the design....

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the house but also stage areas.

At this point in the tour it became pretty obvious that a huge amount of thought has gone into the design of the Performing Arts Centre. I've seen venues without dressing rooms, or poor mix positions, and a myriad of other factors designed to make staging a show difficult. None of this nonsense is a problem at The Concourse. If you need a patch point or a three phase outlet, you're virtually guaranteed it will exist exactly where it needs to. Even little things like being able to unplug the cables connecting to chain motors and line arrays to enable service have been thought of.

The Concert Hall

With a capacity of 1000 (including 114 seated in the choir stalls), the Concert Hall certainly seems the star attraction of the complex. It was designed with an acoustic plan in mind – the reverb time is around 1.9 seconds by default. Given the venue was designed for symphony performances, this is ideal for 90% of applications. For times when a shorter RT is required, acoustic baffles can be dropped in which reduces this to around 1.5 seconds. The baffle system is a custom Jands creation – fully motorized with remote control from the stage via a touch screen interface. 8 preset "scenes" can be stored, and any of these recalled from the bio box.

Another hand held touch screen interface controls the winches in the Concert Hall, and the system will handle up to 16 motors. The motors receive data from the controller, and send back data including load info and a "heartbeat". If a motor goes offline, the system will show an alert. Motors for the LX bars are fixed in position, while additional motors can be repositioned up or down-stage by sliding along I beams on rollers. Access to the fixed luminaries is excellent, with an enclosed walkway grid spanning the entire room. Spot positions are easy for operators to access and work in safely. Comms, data, DMX and three phase outlets are everywhere. Dimmers are Jands HPC units, hardwired directly to the LX position outlets. The HPC units can switch to provide constant hot power for DMX controlled fixtures, projectors, or anything else which can't be dimmed.

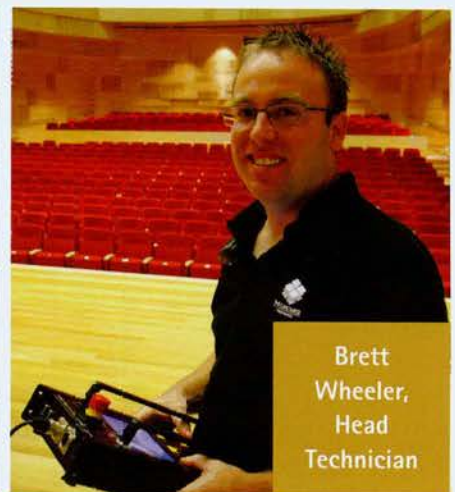
An ETC Ion console handles lighting in the Concert Hall, and it's connected to 3



David Banks,
Operations
Manager



**Simon
Koenig,**
Technical
Manager



**Brett
Wheeler,**
Head
Technician

universes of DMX distribution handled by JANDS splitters. An Allen Et Heath iLive T112 and Martin W8 system take care of FOH mix duties, with additional smaller cabinets flown as infill for the side and rear choir stalls. A selection of QSC KW series boxes is held in house for use as monitors and small standalone PA systems across all venues. I asked Simon how touring operators have received the iLive: "A lot of the operators have been very pleasantly surprised with the iLive system – they've picked it up very quickly and had good things to say about it". The ETC consoles have been met with similarly favourable responses: "We've got the ETC Ion in the Concert Hall and the EOS 4 universe in the Theatre – it's a great system. I know that EOS is what's just been put in The Opera house as well and it's really becoming a good standard for a lot of entertainment and performing arts areas".

The Concert Hall stage is tapered from 16m wide at the front to 10m wide at the back, and it's 9m deep. This makes it big enough to hold a 60 piece orchestra as is, or with 4 rows of seats removed and an extension fitted a 90 piece will fit. In case you need a piano, there's an in house Steinway

grand worth \$300k. It sounds pretty good. It came into the building via the 4x3m goods lift, which allows access to the The Concert Hall. As rooms go, The Concert Hall sounds pretty good too – Simon explained to me how he metered the SPL from a single viola from on stage, and then from the back row of the hall. The difference was 2dB. For the uninitiated among us, that's some seriously impressive acoustics. I was taking photos from back row and I could hear the reflection of my camera shutter. Cleanly.

Events

The first rock gig to be staged in the concert hall was Richard Clapton, with Wendy Matthews opening the show. "Ralph" has been a local for years, so it was nice to see things kick off with local community involvement. Since then around 120 shows have been staged across the venues, with up to 5 events running concurrently some days. Brett Wheeler (Full time Head Technician) and Jon Espay (Head of Lighting) support Simon with shows, and together they are backed up by a pool of around 15 contractors with a range of specialty skills.

Upcoming shows include the English National Ballet for a 2 week run, Steve Earle, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, and John Waters: Looking through a glass onion. Not bad for a venue which is still in its infancy. It's not just the big guns who get a run at The Concourse. The Willoughby Symphony, Willoughby Theatre Company and Chatswood Musical Society also have a string of shows ahead. Terrace Bar at The Concourse runs on Friday nights, and showcases local talent.

Asked about the biggest challenge he faces in such a new venue, Simon explained that it's also one of the most exciting aspects of his job – finding ways to “re-invent the wheel”. Clients ask “How do you usually do such and such?” and he explains that their event will be the first time that such and such has been done in the venue. Century Venues Event Managers coordinate all the business and ticketed events.

Building

The Concourse precinct was constructed by AW Edwards, with electrical work by Stowe. Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp was commissioned for the architectural design of the complex, with Marshall Day Acoustics consulting. Technical installations were by Jands and Technical Audio Group, and the tech component took about 18 months to

complete. Staffing was well planned, with Simon and several others working off site for 6 weeks prior to completion of the build. “It's not every day you get to open a brand new complex like this, with the resources we have and the ability to do a diverse range of shows”.

The first week of opening saw 21 shows staged in the venue, so a lot of preparation was done to ensure everyone hit the ground running. Simon is the former tech manager of The Hills Centre, and his peers originate from Riverside Theatre, The Seymour Centre, and the Opera House so there's some solid skills in house. “A lot of the crew are relishing the opportunity to take a fresh empty building, and mould it the way they'd like to see it work.”

Simon points out that they are lucky that the consultants and production companies involved in the design and install put a lot of thought into it before a single cable was laid. Being able to work with the installers prior to opening meant things ran the way they were supposed to once the doors were open. This is evident in the little touches throughout the venue – cleaning light switches in the right places, blue worklights backstage that can be centrally controlled by the stage manager, sensible design. Because so much very new technology is involved there have been a few little bugs to iron out over time,

but that's expected.

The building was designed with the future in mind – it's versatile and it's environmentally friendly. A 5 megalitre water tank sits beneath the complex and collects rainwater, which is used as grey water to flush bathrooms and can also serve the local area. House lighting throughout the foyers and smaller rooms is controlled by a Clipsal C-Bus system, which interfaces to “HAL”, the building management system.

The system is smart – temperature, humidity and wind sensors spread around the exterior can respond to changes in the weather. If the foyer is hot and there's a cool breeze outside, the building management computer can open appropriate louvers to enable cross ventilation rather than firing up an air-con plant. When staging outdoor events the crew keeps an eye on the weather using iPhone apps, but they know that when the building starts closing windows by itself, it generally means rain approaching.

For shows where a lot of power is required, it's freely available. Power distribution is located sensibly backstage in each area, and fantastically the building management system is capable of data logging the power delivery. This is something we should see in more venues!

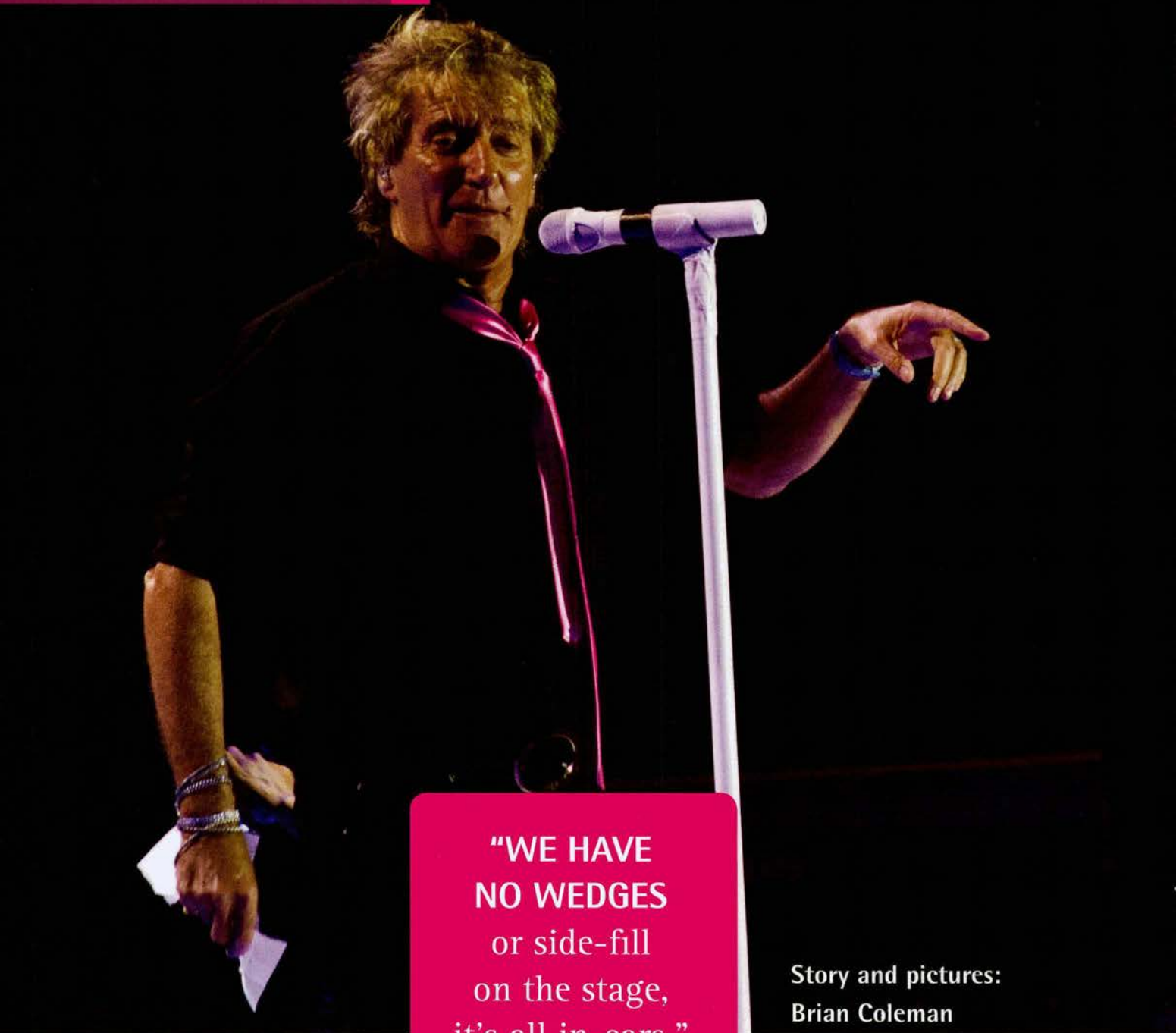
Concourse really is world class.

α thanks Simon Koenig for the tour and the interview!

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**"WE HAVE
NO WEDGES
or side-fill
on the stage,
it's all in-ears."**

David Vinnicombe,
Systems Technician,
Major Tom (UK).

Story and pictures:
Brian Coleman

The shiny, white Vegas-style stage floor and set that tours with Rod Stewart sits somewhat juxtaposed to the raspy vocal stylings and larrikinisms of the legendary architect of abrasion. Nevertheless it does sit well with the fact that the 67-year-old rock 'n' roller will commence a 2-week engagement at the Colosseum, Caesars Palace upon completion of his Australian tour.

I caught up with the show at the Hope Estate winery in the NSW Hunter, where a team of stage-hands laboriously swept the vinyl marley floor surgically clean prior to the show--and there wasn't a fold-back wedge or a side-fill stack to be seen anywhere.

The audio system

"We have no wedges or side-fill on the stage, it's all in-ears," said systems technician David Vinnicombe.

David Vinnicombe hails from Brisbane, but has been residing in London for almost 5 years working as a full-time systems technician for FOH technician Lars Brogaard's outfit Major Tom. And it was Major Tom who supplied the Meyer System for the tour straight out of the UK.

The speaker arrays consisted of Meyer's Milo system, which the company describes as a 'high-power curvilinear array loudspeaker'. Milo is really Meyer's newer, lightweight, self-contained evolution that built on the success of its heavier M3D line array predecessor. Vinnicombe explains:

"The boxes are all powered, the crossover and all that is all done in the box. They're all amplified, self-powered...and Meyer developed that line driver (points to the Galileo 616 in the rack). You can break it up into different zones or do anything. The box they made before this one was pretty heavy--the M3D; eight boxes probably weighed the same as that (points to the sum of the Milo array hangs)--maybe not that bad but close" says Vinnicombe.

Rod Stewart

'The Hits' 2012 Tour

Rock's rudest
sound guy runs
out of headroom



The Galileo was developed by Meyer to drive and align its arrays whilst having the ability to separate them into different zones. The Galileo 616 is a 6-input, 16-output fully digital matrix processor, which can run on something as simple as a laptop, but can also be controlled from its front panel.

"I time align the system and Lars comes out and EQs it. He's a bit of a stickler for things being right he knows what he wants. I spend about half an hour, I suppose, and then he (Lars) spends another half an hour. We do the time alignment and the EQ of each little zone. These Galileos (Galileo 616) are a line driver, so they do all the time alignment and everything on that computer there (points to a laptop) it's all controlled off that," said Vinnicombe.

The Meyer Milo arrays did look a little bit thin in the air for a venue and crowd capacity of this size however.

"Your eyes won't believe your ears"

- Lou Mannarino, Live Engineer for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra



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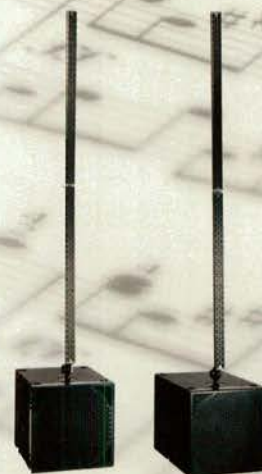


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"Basically, we flew 14-a-side (Milo arrays), and then we had a little stack of 4, which was like a side-hang thing--that was on the stage. There were two (arrays) in the middle that filled the centre bit and then on the very outside edges of the rigs - outside the flown stuff on the stage - there was a stack of 4 speakers," said Vinnicombe. (Pic: below).

Additional to the Milo arrays were Meyer's 700-HP subwoofers, which employ 18-inch drivers with 4-inch voice coils rated to handle 1200 watts of power. These are self-powered with Meyer's 1125 watts per channel MOS-FET amplifiers. 'Meyer make their own amps -- it's all their sound. We also had 12-a-side Meyer 700-HP subs.

"The control package on the front-of-house and the monitors normally go everywhere. We brought all the set, the band risers

and the white towers for the stage set," said Vinnicombe.

In keeping with a clean stage, 'no wedge' semblance the band all use Sennheiser IEMs (in-ear-monitors). Two DiGiCo D5 consoles are employed for the IEM foldback mixes. Sven Jorgensen mixes Rod Stewart's IEMs and Davey Fryson handles the IEMs for the rest of the band. Stewart and the band use the AKG 4500 series wireless microphone system, and Stewart uses an AKG C5900M condenser microphone.

Lars Brogaard

Denmark-born Lars Brogaard is one of the principal owners of Major Tom, a Europe based audio rental and tour production company. He has mixed FOH for Rod Stewart for some 27 years. Brogaard has been using the Digico SD7 to mix Rod Stewart since 2008, and Brogaard helped develop Digico's first D5 console back when Digico was Soundtracs. A D5 is also used to mix the foldback monitors.

I entered the bio box at Hope Estate for a pre-arranged

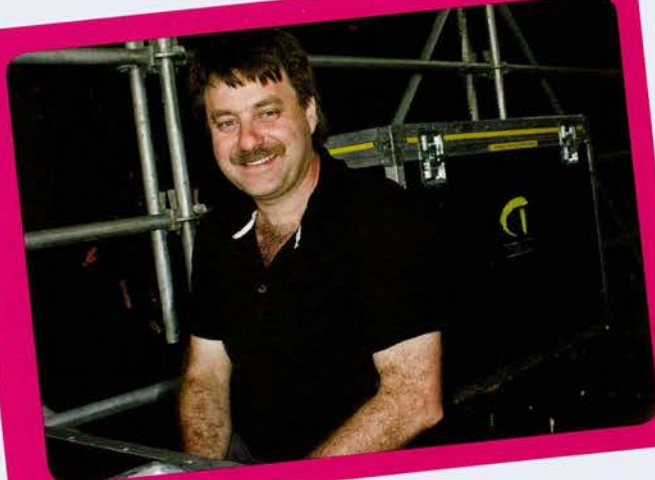
photograph of whiz-bang sound engineer, Warwick Newman who had support band Diesel scintillating through the Meyer system via a Verue Profile desk to the spontaneous delight of the audience. It was then that Newman introduced me to Major Tom's David Vinnicombe - another of the industry's nice guys.

Vinnicombe told me that Brogaard always came to the desk some time before kick-off, and that would be my opportunity to get a photo and possibly a contact for some later details.

A short time later the veteran design technician and soundie climbed into the bio box, checked a couple of incidentals and slumped back into his chair at the helm of the Digico SD7. This was my chance. I introduced myself and asked permission to take quick snap. "No, don't do that," drawled Brogaard.

At first I thought Brogaard was joking, but then I remembered that the Danes are not noted for their convivial sense of humour. So I cowered back to the darkest corner of the bio box to reevaluate my strategy. After all, I had to photograph the show from the sound desk armed only with a Canon 55-250mm kit lens because Rod Stewart wasn't allowing any photography from the pit.

So given that the stage was some 60 metres from the sound desk, the elevation of the bio box was a big plus--and I didn't want to make a fuss and get kicked out and have to shoot from ground zero.



After licking my wounds I again sauntered up to Brogaard and humbly asked him for contact details. After a 1000 word free editorial for his own sound hire company, who had shipped all the sound equipment out from the UK. He listened to my impassioned plea but didn't respond. So I tried a little name-dropping: "Er Lars, I recently interviewed Elton John's (Rod Stewart's life-long friend) sound engineer, Matt Herr for CX." Silence. "You know...Matt Herr, Lars, Elton John's sound engineer?" I pleaded. "No, I don't," he replied. Thus ended the interview and lost photo op.

The band

Eventually Rod Stewart entered the pristine stage and launched into his trademark steel-wool vocals and tried-and-tested stage antics. The band was also highly polished and included three dynamic female backing singers along with J'Anna Jacoby (violinist), Katja Rieckermann (sax player), Paul Warren (guitarist), Conrad Korsch (bass), David Palmer (drummer), Matt O'Connor (percussion) and Chuck Kentis (keyboards).

Stewart's vocals did tend to make me a little uncomfortable, but all is forgiven when you consider his vocal nodule ops and thyroid surgery--plus he is a master showman.

Lighting

Mark Payne is Rod Stewart's lighting designer and operator. The show consisted of 22 VL3000 Spots, 25 VL3500 Washes, 8 VL6c, 24 Par 64 NSP, 12 Par 64 MFL, 4 FOH Gladiators and 6 StarLite Short. Payne operated the show on a Wholehog3 and a Catalyst. PRG supplied the kit. You don't think about house lights in a rock 'n' roll show but these were often featured in the sing-a-long songs. But it's the huge video screen that dominates the set with its graphics and IMAG (live video feeds of the on-stage talent and the audience).

The mix

The first impression of the mix was the sound of a boomy rubbery kick drum that wouldn't have been out-of-place in the 70s coming out of a stack of double W bins, but didn't quite compliment the Meyer 700-HP subs. The vocals were up front and Paul Warren's guitar solos were clean and beautiful--and he had a couple of fingers in plaster as a result of a recent accident--but Brogaard gave the guitar solos a creamy in-your-face mix.

The most uncomfortable vexation however was that the mix started to sound noticeably edgy not too long into the show. So I took a stroll to the rear of the venue where some of the 15,000 or so (I'm guessing) punters were seated.

Here there was no mincing of words or technicalities. Here was good old-fashioned distortion.

Was Brogaard pushing it too hard, or did he just not bring enough kit?



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Jon English

Rock
Show

Old black eyes is back

WHEN JON ENGLISH worked with the Foster Brothers in the 1980's, we always said he could do better with a young band. No offence to the beer boys, that is just what we crew used to say.



Flash forward thirty years and here he is with a bunch of conservatorium graduates who can play anything and who seem to be on a mission to impress an audience with instrument swapping that must confuse the backline techs.

Rock Show did a lot of dates across the last year or so, and ended in Sydney at the State Theatre, but all that ended was this setlist, because the ensemble return almost intact for Rock Revolution, starting in June and touring to most places.

All they have to do is repeat the recipe, and full houses and rave reviews will follow. So why is it so good?

It plays to the strengths of the performers, is very well structured by Isaac Hayward (musical director, cello, guitar and keys) and Stuart Smith (director, vocals, piano) and provides Jon English with the platform on which he works best.

Eight musicians cover a very wide range of 60's and 70's music, and the song list for the forthcoming tour will probably be every bit as diverse as the Rock Show.

At Sydney's State Theatre for the final

show before this next tour, the sound mix built in sympathy with the material. Bob Dylan's 'The Times they are a Changing', and then AC/DC's 'Let there be rock' demand different treatment to Janis Joplin's 'Me and Booby McGee' which showcased the extraordinary talents of Amy Vee, possibly the star of this group.

Mixed by Scott Travis from Castle Acoustic on a humble Midas Venice desk, CX could not fault the sound. We were further impressed by Andrew Snell's lighting design and operation, which resisted the usual temptations and kept proper and constant front light on the show.

Where required, the sound and the lights would rock out – but never at crossed purposes with the performance. Sound levels started low and built modestly, exactly at the right SPL for the given number.

Scott Travis was obviously juggling inputs and effects the hard way, without digital scenes, which made his accomplishment all the more impressive.

A little less successful was the monitor mix, where some gesticulations from Jon English and resulting feedback from his

acoustic guitar slightly distracted – but again it was probably the frenetic swapping of instruments, vocals, and microphones that would make the monitor gig hard to keep up with.

Individual stardom happened almost with each song. Led Zeppelin's Kashmir allowed Nataya Bing to exactly nail the violin lines, atop Stuart Smith's wailing Robert Plant vocals. Just like the real thing, minus the volume.

But it is Jon English who elevates the show from a club cover band to an experience, with his unique and masterful stagecraft. A few of his hits are there as well, including a pisstake on Three Ribbons, a song he introduces as one he grew bored with before he finished recording it.

Even Jon's old cabaret gags work again, reborn into the show with plenty of humour from all the cast. Rock Show or Rock Revolution, if it has most of these young hungry super talented musicians and old Black Eyes, it is most certainly a very good thing.

Especially if Scott Travis and Andrew Snell are at FOH. **- Julius**

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What If?

What If there
were one set of rules?

By Andrew Mathieson

Much noise has been made in the press in the last 18 months or so about the "Harmonisation of WHS Legislation" (Work, Health and Safety for the uninitiated) across every State in this fair land of ours, and there was much initial rejoicing in these offices at the prospect of there finally being one set of rules nationally to deal with the interpretation and enforcement of the multitude of standards covering the types of machinery that we design, build and install.

The celebrations were fairly short lived, as it became apparent that a number of States would either decline to participate in this harmonisation, or would take the standardised legislation and develop their own subtle variants of the new rules that would apply only in those particular States.

At the moment, NSW, Qld and the NT have adopted the new rules, and the other States and Territories are still reviewing matters before making a decision as to whether they will be participating or not. Some States are likely to decide one way or the other fairly soon, but others are indicating at least another 12 months.

What does this all mean in terms of Stage Machinery standards and compliance?

It means that there is still no Australian Standard(s) for Stage Machinery (Entertainment Technology Machinery or whatever we want to call it) and there is still no uniform legislative mechanism nationally, that dictates which standards (home grown or imported) that this type of machinery should comply with in the absence of specific standards.

This leads us to the question of how this issue is dealt with in other countries.

In the UK, there are 2 published standards – BS7905-1 Specification for the design and manufacture of above stage equipment and BS9706-1 Code of practice for installation, use and removal of above stage equipment. Additionally, there are a number of statutory regulations that mandate the use of these standards, most significantly the Lifting Operation and Lifting Equipment Regulation (LOLER) 1998.

In Germany (and by default, a large part of the rest of Europe) there is the much talked about and often misunderstood BGV (BGV-D8, BGV-D8+ and BGV-C1) Codes of Practice. These codes are not mandated by any piece of legislation and are voluntary, but they are so widely accepted that most insurance companies require their use as a precondition to obtaining insurance cover

for a venue or performance.

In the USA, ESTA has a project running for BSR E1.6 which is the "powered rigging project" with BSR E1.6-2 "Electric chain hoists for rigging purposes" currently in the public review draft stage.

In Australia, the standard(s) most commonly used as a "minimum requirements" reference is the AS1418 series "Cranes, Winches and Hoists" which is a multi-part standard that is often enforced by local WHS authorities. While these standards are very relevant to Stage Machinery, there are numerous inconsistencies, not in the standards themselves, but in their application to Stage Machinery.

The UK and German standards (codes of practice), like the AS1418 standards, are built around the principle of Risk Assessment, whereas the US codes are built around the principle of product liability. Having said that, the draft US code is much more prescriptive in matters such as maintenance, inspections, training and quality assurance and in that respect have much to offer.

This topic is not going to be covered in one of these short articles, so next issue we will take a look at the various standards world wide relating to motorised chain hoists and their controls, until then, stay safe.

This article forms general opinion only and must not be relied on without a detailed, professional risk assessment undertaken specific to your situation. Consult a professional staging company every time you consider anything that may involve risk with flown objects or people.

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Resolution X powers up

More space and more gear this year

N

ot yet 15 years old, the Melbourne lighting, rental and production house Resolution X has enjoyed continual growth its whole life. CX went to Noble Park to see why.

Tim Hall is the managing director of Resolution X, and leads a team of 20 crew supplemented by up to 40 casuals. With more than 500 movers, 2000 LED fixtures and 1000 lengths of truss, this is a highly capable lighting supplier.

"We started to fill a gap in the corporate theatre market at the time, and thought we could do better for clients from a lighting perspective", he says. This means attention to detail, like always hanging each moving light, addressing and checking white balance before every hire. "It's about quality and saving time on the job".

The larger picture is that Resolution X is part of Lightmoves Group, a lighting specialist supply house with over 50 staff. Lightmoves do sales, design, commissioning and installation of stage and architectural lighting, and have built an enviable reputation over three decades.

Lightmoves directors Andrew Sherar and Braham Ciddor are Tim's partners in Resolution X, which specializes in rental and production. Lightmoves do the sales and installations, and another group entity Brown's Precision Welding makes truss and lighting support products.

This produces nice synergies.



Tim Hall



Neat cable street

Benefits

"We can be a small business or a large company, and enjoy the benefits of either", says Tim. An example is that they designed their own stacking truss, after doing a cost analysis of shipping. "We worked out over five interstate shows, the cost of shipping regular truss and the air gaps within, would pay for the new design".

Funny enough, after building 60 sets of the new 500mm stacking truss, they found it was very similar to another design they saw at a trade show. "There's not too much unique about it, there has to be couplers, and there has to be a removable rail on the bottom".

A while back they developed a 300mm box truss that uses plates and bolts (like 500mm Box Truss) for connection. "We had a pin system on a truss and if it flexed we saw crew using ratchet straps to try to force the joins. Now it is simple. The truss costs more to buy but saves money in reduced labour costs over its life – and the crew like it too", Tim says.

They make their own roadcases, all clad in a custom purple colour that makes them stand out.

When we called at the end of March it was the first quiet week in a run of late Summer madness. "Last week there were three sticks of truss here". The stock was all neat and tidy, cables all in the right state.

"We are obsessed with test and tag and doing things pro-perly", Tim said, and we believe him.

Next challenges

We talk for a while about the convergence of video, vision and lighting. ResX have Martin LC LED panels – and are careful to not oversell the result. "It is more a scenic element, not for text, with a 40mm pitch".

Tim feels the whole lighting gig will be recast as vision soon, since increasingly the lighting desk is where the vision packages in a live show are triggered. "Really the problem is the skill sets are lagging. We need more operators who are across all technologies – automated lighting, media servers and content creation."

The next set of vision LED screens that ResX introduce are not known. "This is the \$64 question. We are just sitting waiting and watching".

Up to now Tim has bought well. Of late he has added more Clay Paky and Martin. "The Mac 700 is our workhorse. We expect at least five years from our movers and even then we don't usually sell them off. When they age we keep them offline, not for driveway hire". A bunch of older fixtures were being prepped for loan to a training college the day we were at ResX. "We support training. And we support the community more broadly – just last weekend Lightmoves had a bunch of scouts using the warehouse for a phone book delivery".

Later this year ResX will move, having run out of space at Noble Park. Tim is already workshopping a better layout for hire, to remove the pinch point he says happens with cables. Given the very high preparation costs associated with lighting production, some fine tuning will inevitably improve the already impressive performance of Resolution X.

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GoCase Drawers Case

The opportunity to road test a case on the CX Roadshow seemed too good to pass up



By Jimmy Den-Ouden

I took a lot of stuff with me on the CX Summer Roadshow 2012. Power leads, test tagging gear, laptops, printers, registration cards, lanyards, tools, power drill, microphones, cameras, sticky fluoro tape, gels, and of course the all important coffee plunger and beans. I already had a packer to carry the bulky stuff, but it was all the small things that were easily lost and hard to find that had me concerned. I needed a system.

Cases.com.au came to the rescue; with a GoCase 4 drawer road case arriving at the CX bunker barely a day after we'd spoken to

them. The case arrived in a truck piloted by a very confused looking courier, travelling on its wheels and wrapped in a nice cardboard sleeve to prevent scratches. It was brand spanking new. Everything worked very nicely too – the drawers slid smoothly with lit-

tle rubber end stops, the wheels turned and locked well, and a 5th wheel held the piano-hinged door in place when open.

First order of business was to load it full of stuff. The case already weighed 50kg, but since I had a team of talented loaders in every city to move it about I wasn't really very concerned. The idea of a case like this is that it spends its life on its wheels – there shouldn't be any need to lift it regularly. Next order of the day was to get the case over to ATS, for which I had to flip it onto its back to fit it into the car. First rule broken before I'd even left the building, and I was off to a good start. We packed the ATS truck

Brand: GoCase
Model: GO-4DRAWER-XL
RRP: \$850.00 inc GST
Product Info: www.cases.com.au
Distributor: www.cases.com.au

and last in was my drawers case, which had already had some "travel upright" stickers attached. Next stop Brisbane.

I arrived in Brisbane to find my drawers case all intact and with contents safe and sound. The same thing happened in every other city, even the time when I opened up the truck to see the upward pointing arrows cleverly inverted, and the case travelling with its wheels to God. It didn't matter, the drawers all still work and everything inside was fine. One thing I did learn is not to open the door 180 degrees then open multiple drawers at once – this weight shift tends to make the whole thing fall over. Which I guess is fair enough. Lesson learnt.

Several weeks and 12,000km on the road later, my case made its way back to Sydney. It survived 5 load ins and load outs, 2 cross loads, various stackings and packings, and being handled by 40 different loaders. It's now covered in stickers and tape, and somewhere along the line one of my peers kindly thought to flip the arrows upside down, but it's still in one piece and so is all the gear within.

GoCase drawers case WIN.



◀ Note that "this way up" is often open to interpretation



For video of this GEARBOX review, click here in the interactive CX-E version of the magazine. If reading print, please visit cx-tv.com to find this review.



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More info at: www.cmi.com.au



By Jimmy Den-Ouden



Sennheiser XS Wireless Systems

What do you get for a grand less than Sennheiser evolution series? XS...

Sennheiser has enjoyed good success with their evolution series wireless systems, so much so they're now onto the third generation. But not everyone can afford around \$1600 for a wireless system, nor does everyone understand the subtle nuances of using such a kit.

The Sennheiser XS wireless system is here to address the needs of these users. There are four different systems available, and depending on which one you choose they start at \$529 RRP inc GST. So does affordable translate to cheap?

First up let's talk power output. The evolution range is 50mW, while the XS range is 10mW. That doesn't seem like a lot, but in open air with line of sight we've seen it work at 100m range, which is more than adequate for many applications.

Brand: Sennheiser
Model: XS Wireless Systems
RRP: \$529 inc GST for handheld kit with 835 capsule, instrument kit, or lapel kit. \$579 inc GST for headset kit or handheld kit with super cardioid condensor capsule.
Product Info: www.sennheiser.com
Distributor: www.syntec.com.au



For video of this GEARBOX review, click here in the interactive CX-E version of the magazine. If reading print, please visit cx-tv.com to find this review.

Tuning range is 24MHz (614-638MHz) in 8 groups of 12 channels. This means you can run up to 12 systems concurrently using preset frequencies – assuming there's no interference from other RF in the area. If there is, shift everything to a different group. The groups are spaced out across the tuning range, and the channels within each group are selected to avoid intermod problems.

The XS system is a true diversity system with a dual front end, and true balanced outputs. Both of these are nice features, and not necessarily common at this price point. Tuning is done via the receiver front panel, and if the included groups don't suit then you can manually tune in 0.025MHz steps. Once the receiver is tuned, hold the sync button on the transmitter then press sync on the

receiver. The transmitter synchronises via 2.4GHz data link. It's all straightforward. Sensitivity on the transmitter is adjusted via a slide switch in 10dB steps from 0 to -30dB. I reckon 0dB is too high for most applications, and running at -20 or -30dB still gives good results without too much noise floor. Output on the receiver is via XLR and TRS, and can be switched between mic and line level.

The transmitters are made of plastic, and while they're not as solid as their metal counterparts they should hold up okay under general use provided they are treated with care. Power and mute are controlled with separate switches, with the mute switch being easily accessible on both belt pack and handheld models. The belt packs are compatible with the existing Sennheiser range of ME series lapels and employ the same connector as the evolution packs.

The receivers include a power supply with international adapters, as well as dual quarter wave antennae. The receivers also feel kind of plastic-ish, but really for the money you couldn't complain too much. The front panel menu is an LCD type, with SET, UP and DOWN keys for navigation. There aren't any XS series specific accessories available other than rack mount kits, but the evolution series antenna splitters and accessories are compatible so you could build a multi-channel XS system pretty easily.

The XS range really seems targeted at



the MI market. It's something music stores can sell easily as a simple package solution, and musicians and amateur users will be able to understand it. It should do well in the educational sector too. The savings in price come at the sacrifice of metal enclosures, wider tuning range and power output. For many users this won't matter a sod, and to these people the XS range represents very good value indeed

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By Jimmy Den-Ouden



Midas PRO2C Console

Baby wants a Midas?



Or more accurately, Midas wants a baby. This is an interesting move for Midas, who traditionally have stuck with large format digital consoles such as the XL8, PRO6 and PRO9. There's a lot to like about these consoles, especially the Pro series. They feel good to use, and sound great. But they're very big, and very heavy, and this means they're not practical for every application. Enter stage left the PRO2C. Josh from Le Crème Productions in Sydney was kind enough to lend us his shiny new PRO2C for a day so we could check it out.

It looks a lot like a baby version of a PRO6. The console layout is not identical, but it's similar enough that once you've used a PRO6 or PRO 9, navigating the PRO2C is a very simple transition. Some controls are reduced in size – for instance the PEQ section has one set of pots which are switched between bands, rather than a set of controls for each filter.

Physically, the PRO2C is just shy of a metre in width, about 750mm deep, and weighs 37kg. Cased up, it seems bigger and it's definitely much heavier. Midas don't really do lightweight cases. The "C" in the model stands for compact, which it is. There's a straight Pro2 as well, which adds another fader bank to the surface and is a little wider. Both surfaces are sold as a package including a remote stage rack.

Audio transport to and from the PRO2C is achieved via dual AES50 "SuperMAC" cable runs. The SuperMAC protocol sup-

◀ Josh Wolf and Nathan Salt from Le Crème Production Services



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ports bi-directional transfer of 24 channels at 96kHz. The stage rack can switch to 48kHz and run twice as many channels, but the console is fixed at 96kHz 40 bit. The included DL251 stage rack is the fixed configuration variety - 48 in 16 out. Dual 100m Cat5 cables on rollers are part of the deal, however a third cable can be used to provide redundancy for either of the first two. In addition to the 48 inputs on the rack, another 8 mic/line inputs are included on the rear of the console itself, as well as 8 assignable outputs. Fixed LCR outputs, talk and dual stereo monitor outputs are also found on the console, along with dual AES3 inputs and outputs. Video sync wordclock in and loop, midi, DVI, dual USB, Ethernet control, and 6x AES50 ports complete the back panel. You can do additional routing of signals between the AES50 ports, so you can run one console as a monitor board then split off to another for FOH.

Navigating the console it seems somehow easier than its bigger relatives. There are 8 VCA groups as well as 6 POP groups - allowing you to quickly bring a selection of channels onto the same layer. A bunch of hot keys take you to the relevant screen to setup patching, effects, graphics and such, then the built-in track ball al-

Brand: Midas
Model: PRO2C
RRP: \$25,995 inc GST for the touring system including roadcase, 2x 100m Cat5 leads and DL251 IO box. Console alone RRP \$18,865 inc GST.
Product Info:
www.midasconsoles.com
Distributor:
www.nationalaudio.com.au

lows adjustment of the parameters within. The buttons are above the trackball which feels weird to me, but apparently you can connect an external mouse via USB so it's not a big problem. Depending on configuration the console will provide up to 28 Klark Teknik DN370 EQs (1 for every mix bus), or up to 6 effects engines. Or a selection of both. The PRO2C can operate in normal stereo, LCR, and even surround modes including 5.1.

I didn't time the boot up with a stopwatch, but it doesn't seem inordinately slow - maybe a minute at worst. Setup is pretty straightforward too - more so than I remember the PRO6 being last time I ran

into one. The PRO2C doesn't feel like it would work for two operators the same way as the PR06 or PR09, but I don't think that's really where it's aimed.

Being the newest addition to the family often has benefits - in the case of the PRO2C it's the dynamics processing algorithms that have been passed down from the X.8. Each channel has 4 modes of compression, and each output bus has 5. Another noteworthy feature is the dual power supplies on both the console and stage rack. As well as this console would suit live sound applications, I think Midas sees it hitting the broadcast community. The ability to setup mix minuses on auxiliaries really supports this theory.

Being a Midas console it's not unreasonable to expect that the PRO2C sounds good, and it really does. It's not as fast to navigate as its larger relatives but this is ultimately a function of reduced surface real estate. You still can't shift it single handedly, but that's no surprise. What is a surprise is the price - it's seriously a lot less than you'd expect. What the PRO2C lacks in size it more than makes up for in value - essentially it has the same functionality as a Heritage 3000 with a bunch of additional inserts and effects. It might not be an X.8, but it sure sounds like one.



BMS Video Link

Quit dragging the chain
in your camera chain...

By Jimmy Den-Ouden

Cables are great. We've been using cables for years for audio, lighting and video applications. But sometimes it's not practical to use a cable, so we have things like wireless microphones and cameras. Camera links are nothing new, but in the past they've been quite unwieldy both to carry around and operate, and the licensing and frequency requirements were a major headache.

Broadcast Microwave Services make wireless microwave video links for several markets, one of these being broadcast. We were fortunate enough to get hold of a complete end-to-end system to experiment with in the CX bunker (and beyond).

Our kit came with a transmitter, receiver, block dividers and antennae. Gencom were kind enough to supply an HD JVC camera and Plura monitor too, which made the test process really easy!

The NT2423 SDHD transmitter is a tiny little thing. It is designed as an extension

to a V-Lock battery, so to install it on the camera is simply a matter of removing the battery and inserting the transmitter between it and the camera. Plug in the SD/HD SDI input and you're ready to go – it powers up as soon as you connect the battery. The transmitter outputs 200mW, and you can also input composite video and stereo analogue audio at mic or line

level. Power consumption is 12W, and at 500g it makes only a slight difference to the weight of the camera.

Transmission occurs across an 8MHz channel bandwidth, between 1.95 and 7.4GHz (subdivided). Our test kit was running low in the 2GHz band. Our NT2423 SDHD came with a small antenna mounted directly on top – forget the days of beacons and backpacks. Latency on the system is a mere 1 frame, which means it could easily be used for IMAG purposes at concerts without any discernable delay to screen.

The DR2505HD receiver is a diversity system, which means it requires dual antennae. It's available in SD or SD/HD models, and the difference is a software update. So you can buy SD, then upgrade to HD later on for an additional fee. The receiver can be Genlocked to an external source, and can also pass CCU data back to the camera. In other words you can have a real camera chain, without a cable.

Brand: Broadcast Microwave Services

Model: NT2423SDHD Transmitter with DR2505HD receiver and BDC2006 block down converters

RRP: Around \$65k inc GST for the system we tested

Product Info: www.bms-inc.com

Distributor: www.gencom.com

The DR2505HD actually receives on a 100-800MHz frequency range, so a frequency division needs to happen in order for it to work with the transmitter. This is called block down-conversion, and on our kit was done with a pair of BDC2006 block down converters. These are units which sit between the receive antennae and the receiver RF input. They have switchable internal cavity filters, designed to remove extraneous RF junk from the received signal before it reaches the receiver. In other words, they make the transmit/receive process more reliable in areas of high RF congestion (such as sporting events).

BMS have a range of directional and omni antennae available, our kit was using omni units on both transmitter and receiver with very favourable results. Range on the system is about 1km in open air under optimal conditions, and with support for full 1920x1080i, the picture quality is excellent.

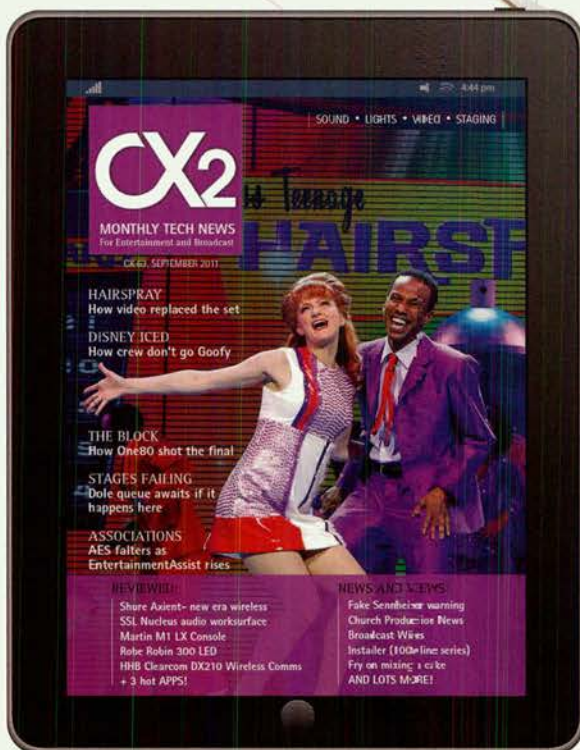
There's a lot to like about this gear. Low latency is a huge win, and the whole system is dead simple to setup. So long as it's been configured in advance you could



send it out without a specialized link technician, and know that whoever was using it would get the right result. Being a premium product it does come at a premium price, but if you know anything about camera links then you'll know they've never exactly been cheap. Considering the range, picture format capability, ease of use and low latency the BMS kit is actually a pretty good deal.



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Michael Althaus from MA ▶



MA onPC Command Wing Just wing it?

MA

Lighting is an interesting company. Their philosophy is that they'd rather have a solid, reliable platform before adding in new features. GrandMA2 software was developed under this practice, and since its introduction a whole host of new features have been added. The software allows users of other lighting control platforms to adopt the GrandMA2 system using familiar operational techniques, then as they become more comfortable they can get into platform specific shortcuts.

A GrandMA2 console is a nice thing if you've got the space and budget, but not everybody does. Running the same software on a computer is a more space efficient option and this is where MA onPC

By Jimmy Den-Ouden



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comes into the picture. The PC based software is free to download and learn, you just need to pay when you want to interface it to actual lights. I'm told that you can run it under BootCamp on a Mac too. It does everything that a GrandMA2 console does, and indeed with a suitable MA Lighting node added on you can use it as a console – the only limitation is parameter count. But sometimes it's a bit difficult to get everything done using just a mouse, so MA Lighting have brought out the onPC Command Wing.

The wing is not a lighting console – it's a control surface designed to work with MA onPC. Just add power and connect to your laptop via USB. It's compact – just 55x40x7 cm in size, and around 6kg in weight. This effectively qualifies it as

hand luggage on a flight. Just add PC laptop – cool yes?

The surface is built using the same components as a full size GrandMA2 console – the same faders, encoders, and backlit dimmable silent press buttons. The layout is not identical to a full size console, but it's close enough that existing users will have no dramas quickly locating the control they require. It feels nice and solid, and it's got an international power supply so it will work fine in most places.

Also on the back of the wing are LTC time code and DMX inputs, as well as MIDI input and output. In a salute to our lighting past, there are even analogue outputs, so you could notionally use the Wing to control some prehistoric dimmers should you own such a thing. Probably the key feature for most users will be the two DMX outputs. The wing allows you to output 2048 parameters, which is not the same as DMX channels. MA treats a fixture parameter as one entity, even if there are several channels required to fully control it. For example, pan and pan fine are just considered to be one parameter. If 2048 parameters isn't enough, this count can be expanded with the addition of MA 2Port Nodes up to 3072 parameters.

There are a couple of markets where the onPC Command Wing is likely to do well. Small touring shows will appreciate its portability, with the wing being relatively affordable even to freelance operators. Small hire companies will find it has great functionality at a rather appealing price. An onPC Wing based control solution will be good in situations where console real estate is limited. While the GrandMA2 consoles are pretty reliable, some situations call for a backup system running in tandem regardless of reliability. Where previously an onPC system could be used, now it becomes a more practical option as a backup with the Command Wing offering better real time controllability in the event the main console should fail. Really, the appearance of the onPC Command Wing only supports the notion that having good lighting control is now more affordable than ever before.

Brand:
MA Lighting
Model: onPC
Command Wing
RRP: \$8799.00
inc GST
Product Info:
www.malighting.com
Distributor:
www.showtech.com.au

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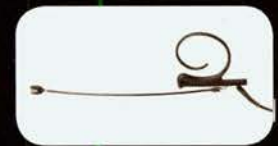
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>> From Page 16

An RTO can be public or private. TAFE is a system of public RTOs, funded and run by government. The erstwhile and lamented Julius Events College was a private RTO.

Everyone at the CX Bunker is passionate about education and training, and all of us were involved in the College at some level. But we've also all been involved in education in other ways, so don't think this story is about us. It's about you and your future. You just need to know that no topic, not even Chinese microphone knockoffs, gets us flamed up faster than a discussion on training and what's happening in this country.

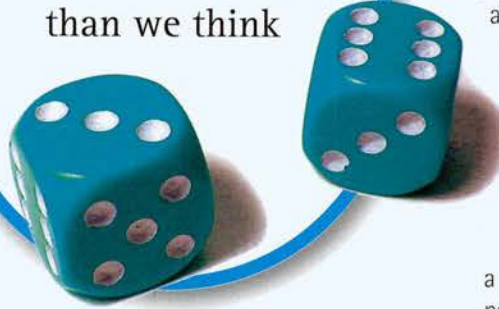
So your chosen trainer (we'll call it the ZZZ RTO) comes along and says "OK, I think I'll run a course in Live Production at Certificate III level". ZZZ RTO then goes to the Training Package which contains Live Production – that would be CUE03 – and looks to see what can be taught. The training package contains, among other things, "Units of Competency" which you can think of as self-contained topics that can be taught and measured. "Make Wigs" is a unit of competency, as is "Work Effectively in Teams", "Produce Computer Aided Drawings", "Minimise Theft", "Mix Live Audio" and "Manage a Budget". There are lots of them, and many have quaint names. Don't be fooled; they have all been lovingly created.

Measurement is very important in VET, because assessment is based on observed competencies. VET cares that the candidate can be seen to do something. That "something" is the competency. It's not about what you learn, or how you learn, or where you learn, it's about "can you be observed doing The Something to the expected level". Along the way there will be theory and information, and experiences, and practical exercises, but the important part is that the candidate can do The Something that is defined in the unit contained in the training package.

Back to school. The ZZZ RTO looks at the Training Package and checks with employers to ensure that what's being taught is going to lead to employment outcomes. Example: even though the unit "Make a Stew" could specify a range of meats that might be used, a Catering RTO would not want to spend lots of time teaching how to cook reindeer, unless all the students are going to Finland. That's called contextualisation. An RTO gets to make a few choices: they go through the Training Package, and identify which units of competency absolutely **MUST** be taught for a particular qualification, and which ones

TRAINING

The stakes are higher than we think



might be really applicable to the students they expect. If they are really smart, they focus on what the employers nearby actually need.

RTOs have freedom to tailor the training experience, but if the aim is to issue a formal qualification – say, a Certificate III, or a Diploma – then they have absolutely no discretion to teach stuff that isn't identified in the Training Package. None. Well, actually they could teach some unidentified stuff, but then they couldn't give any credit for teaching it, and the student gets no credit for learning it, the charging and measurements systems melt down, and the process doesn't work. And the RTO would no doubt get trashed in an audit, which happens. The reality check is that you shouldn't expect stuff to be taught if it's not in the training package somehow.

If you want your people to come out of the sausage machine with skills that are useful to you, based on today's or tomorrow's tools (rather than how we did things ten or twenty years ago) then now is the time to tell the system what those needs are.

And at this point, we've cycled back to those Industry Consultation Workshops that I suggested you should go and register for. Stop here, and do that now. Get a cup of coffee. Then come back, and I'll disclose what some of your peers told me.

INTERMISSION

ACT 2



Welcome back. Now for the plot twist that you didn't see coming out of the ad break. There's a massive, massive moose on the table. It's so big that an elephant can't even fit in the room. That moose is: the Live Production industry doesn't value training in any way that ensures that students will flock to the classroom.

We ask our young folk: "Hey, what do you want to do when you grow up"? For most kids it's a pretty simple flow: you go to school, get a qualification, and get a job. For some jobs there's an extra step, which is you get a certification which says you're allowed to do the job. Pilots, plumbers, engineers, electricians, and doctors all have years of training and mentoring, but they need and carry an additional piece of paper to certify that they are safe to work, and nobody is going to die.

Plenty of other professions require a piece of paper giving permission to work, not because someone will die, but because someone might lose a lot of money. Hello accountants and lawyers.

Then there's us: Showbiz kids. At the top of our profession is a group of practitioners with years of on-the-job experience, who carry endless war stories, and an ability to pull a rabbit out of a hat every time. That's why they get the big bucks. Their ranks are complemented by gig specialists who can safely hang tonnes of speakers, connect kilowatts of lighting, and tune a room within an inch of its life so that several thousand punters get a million dollar experience every time (or at least the \$100 experience for which they paid). Those technical troops are backed with drivers and roadies and grips and gophers who slave tens of hours at a stretch to ensure that everything is in place and everything starts right on time.

Piece of paper: nil. Formal training: probably zero. Recognition of formal training: almost zero. Status of people who carry qualifications: pretty much zero difference from someone who doesn't. In live production you get credit for fitting in and doing a good job, and it's not much more complex than that. You do a good job, you get asked back. You do a crap job, you don't get asked back. Repeat after me: "You're as good as your last gig". Is there anyone who doesn't believe that?

Cultural industries, of which Live Production is one, have two attributes that go to explain why a formal qualification is regarded as less important than what we are seen to do.

Firstly, the key to most jobs in Live Production is that they are creative. Gig lighting is creative. Running a follow-spot is creative. Setting up video and running cameras is creative. Hell, mixing live audio is about as creative and scary as it gets. A piece of paper doesn't authorise you to be creative, and a qualification doesn't say you will be creative. The real measure comes from observation on the job.

Secondly, the reality is that our industry is



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incredibly casualised.

I talked about this with Steve Peereboom, Victorian General Manager for Norwest Productions, who described the staff induction process which is typical of suppliers to the live production industry: "If you take on a young person, you see how they work onsite, how they fit into the crew, and you test them. Or it's someone who has a long CV, and you give them a gig on that basis. It's not like they turn up with a formal qualification". So... what if they do turn up with a formal qualification? "We don't know what that means". Peereboom went on to say that the industry doesn't have enough contact with educators, and doesn't have any way to compare qualifications from different providers. And he's right. Even though a nationally recognised qualification is intended to be consistent across the country and across all providers, it would be a brave person who asserts that a Certificate III from a High School, a TAFE, a private RTO, and an RPL would all be the same thing at the same level.

Tim Cramsie, Traineeship Coordinator at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre (SCEC) explained how they deploy layers of staff. "Our full-timers act as supervisors and technical experts; they take responsibility for outcomes. Casual staff are the bulk of the labour, and do some of the operations". OK, so who gets formal training? SCEC has a traineeship program, and a solid commitment to training of the permanent staff. They do this through a relationship with the Sydney Opera House, which has an internal RTO specialising in, not surprisingly, Live Production. That's good but the only people who have access to that training is staffers who are already on the inside. Cramsie told me that the business – like any business – needs to see a return on investment, and in the past they couldn't control or measure the return from training casuals. The permanents get formal training and the casuals don't.

What is going to make a positive difference is a slow but building industry drift towards formal levelling of jobs against the Award, certainly with larger employers like SCEC and Norwest. Both have started a process which maps their job roles and pay scales against competencies and units from CUE03. At SCEC, staff graduate from level to level according to a gradings system that SCEC has developed in-house. "Staff levelling is based on a series of units that have been very carefully picked to be relevant".

Norwest does something very similar, with a system of levels for staff positioning and remuneration. Steve Peereboom told me that Norwest went firstly to the people who draft-

ed the Award. For each of the skills needed in the business, they compared the skill by level against the award, and formalised a structure. Then they got the Award developers to audit the structure for fairness, in the context of the Norwest business. The result is that people who work at Norwest know exactly what is expected of them, and advancement can be related directly to performance and defined expectation. They do that for permanent and casual staff, Peereboom told me. That's fantastic news. Norwest has taken this position to attract the best people.

But does linking of award-to-skills-to-levels encourage staffers to go for a qualification? Well yes and no. Tim Cramsie reiterated that the business is looking for return on investment. That's no surprise, and hard to argue with. Margins are tight, and typically the cost of warm bodies is the biggest component of the bill that goes back to the client. There is advantage in training old hands on new technologies, because that leads to better client results. There is big need to ensure that staff comply with ever more stringent OH&S practices. Those are drivers where the ROI isn't even questioned, because failure to comply means work stops. And staffers will sign up for training if they believe that they can't progress (read: get a raise) in the absence of a specific piece of training. But for many Live Production or AV businesses, there is no formal linkage between casual staff employment conditions, individual performance, return on investment, and remuneration. Smaller businesses generally operate outside the award. Not surprisingly, there's no drive for those casual staff to go and invest in self-funded training. No gain, no pain.

A further wrinkle is that permanent staff have some incentive and direction to get formal education, but casuals don't. Casuals are,

by definition, independent entities who are responsible for their own everything, which includes training. Should the business invest in training for regular casuals? Cramsie sees the difficulty: the on-demand cost model that dictates use of casual labour leads generally to a situation where the casual labour has no formal commitment to any one employer. The risk is that any investment in training a casual worker might lead to that person going immediately to a better paying role with a competitor. Not good ROI.

I tried another angle. If someone isn't permanent staff, what would motivate them to get a qualification? Like... if you don't have a job yet? Everyone I spoke to said that having a qualification is an asset, to the extent that it will help get you an interview. But the qualification doesn't automatically lead to a job. Why not? Steve Peereboom told me it's because if someone turns up with a qualification, he can't trust what it represents. "There's a lack of clarity about what the qualifications mean in real terms for an employer. What does a Certificate III really enable [a candidate] to do?" Cramsie agrees. "The qualification that you get from vocational training is only as good as the contextualisation being done in that training environment. There is a huge variation in the environments in which students are being taught".

As a sidebar, that's an important observation. VET requires that training must be contextualised for a given audience, that what is being taught is matched to what is required for the outcome. Outcomes vary from place to place. So the "Mix Live Audio" unit can be tweaked to focus on classical music, and that's a perfectly reasonable basis on which to award someone a qualification once you can observe the task being done to the correct performance level for the qualification. Here's the disconnect: nothing about "Mix Live Audio" requires that the graduate should be able to mix all live audio, under all circumstances, if the context is classical music. Simply put, employers come to realise, very quickly, that the only way to be sure someone can do a job is to put them into it and observe.

This is quite different to doctors and pilots, who are required to be able to handle every basic situation before they are ever allowed to be called qualified. Yes, there's more rigour applied when someone might die.

Speaking of which, situations which involve risk provide automatic incentive for training. Venues are now required to demonstrate OH&S compliance, leading to the need for green cards, white cards, yellow cards. A whole palette-load of cards if you

The Meetings

Information on the meetings is here: http://bit.ly/CUE03_consult

To register go here: http://bit.ly/CUE03_consult_reg

John Maizels was an instructor at Julius Events College and holds several VET qualifications. He is Chair of Media Industry Technologist Certification (MITC), an industry-based body which is dedicated to support of learning culture, training and recognition in the Broadcast industry. For the last four years, he has been the Chair of IBSA's Cultural Industries Sector Advisory Committee.

want to collect the set. Associated with each card is training for which you pay money. And that process, because freelancers will spend their own time and money to be trained into a formal qualification if it means they can generate income.

Would things change if employers got together and raised the bar? David Hamilton, Director of Workplace Relations at Live Performance Australia, hit the nail: "Employers aren't anti-education. I think it hasn't been well publicised. [Training] hasn't figured on our industry agenda because ... a lot of the individual members undertake that role for themselves. It's something that Live Performance Australia could take on as an industry agenda". A good sentiment, and I encourage LPA to do exactly that.

ACT 3



Does the Live Production industry have any chance of embracing formal education, and is it worth our effort to support the development work on training packages?

Whenever I've been asked the question "what keeps you awake at night?", the answer is "that we might suddenly discover that all

the skilled people have dropped off the edge, and we've done nothing sensible to build a pool of trained newbs". The state of learning culture is what keeps me awake, and I've concluded that there's no solution so simple that the average worker can fix it without help. I do have a couple of suggestions though.

Since we all seem to agree that the training agenda represents an industry challenge, and one that needs to be solved, the first thing to do is gather, on the basis that we're going to talk and then do. Talk first. Then commit to do. Then actually DO.

It's clear that no change in training uptake is going to happen without employer support, and by that I mean real build-a-value-proposition support which encourages workers to head to school.

Qualifications would be a bonus. Most FTOs would be happy to deliver units of competency and issue statements of attainment. And for all the highly experienced old-hands, award of a qualification through Recognition of Prior Learning is a really effective and attractive option. An RPL qualification is every bit as good as a classroom qualification and, in many cases better and more meaningful. But Tim Cramsie put it very eloquently: "Unless the employer demands a qualification as

part of the skillset, then nothing will happen. Qualifications are almost never listed as part of a job ad". And rarely are qualifications demanded of someone who is already embedded in the gig.

The most urgent need is to start recognising and rewarding workers (fulltime or casual) who are prepared to submit themselves to the pain of getting a formal qualification. This industry desperately needs to have a solid learning culture. And that means, somehow, that we also reward workers who choose to mentor, pass on skills, and help grow the next generation.

Finally, an industry-based certification process wouldn't be a bad thing and there are plenty of examples of how a certification scheme can make a real difference. That too is going to take some employer activity, but it would pay dividends. Voluntary certification not only brings clarity to the real skillset possessed by a candidate, it has also been shown to provide an incentive to return to formal education pathways.

My best advice is: start talking and doing now, before the source of education disappears down the gurgler, and we have nobody left who has been trained how to turn off the lights.

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TheMaiz



Mummy, why is everyone fat on that television?

Julius loves to wind me up on the topic of aspect ratio, which is the relationship between the height and width of a TV picture. He knows I get annoyed to the point of explosion when I'm forced to watch a TV where the aspect ratio is wrongly set. It's not just the ease with which it's possible to squash the pictures vertically (fattened people), squash horizontally (thinned people), drop the edges (centre-cut people with missing arms), or postage stamp (miniaturised people squished into a box that floats in the middle of the screen). These vile on-screen distortions sit there mocking the engineering community. That's bad enough, but my real frustration is that average viewers seem not to be weirded out by pictures which so obviously aren't right.

This is not Maiz-über-pickiness, it's about professional courtesy. My TV industry colleagues (and I, when they let me) go to extreme lengths to capture, transmit and display pictures that look not unlike the original objects. For the longest time we measured our success by the quality of our pictures, and they were bloody good pictures too.

What brought aspect-ratio-serenity unstuck was invention of the flat panel display. For a while, the Japanese and Koreans sensibly produced 4x3 LCDs and plasmas of increasing diagonal size and obscene price. But apparently what consumers really want is Width. Well, width and bragging rights for possession of Big. So the 16x9 display arrived at Hardly Normal and Bing Guys, in dimensions previously reserved for describing the size of a carport. Never mind the content, feel the width. Plus in this economy, real braggards can claim wide, big, and CHEAP.

The technical department of the TV in-

dustry resolved early how to cope with every possible combination of aspect ratio in transmission and reception, but it seems that an actual solution wasn't enough. Someone must have forgotten to tell business users (think clubs, hotels, lounges) two really important facts: (1) consumers can actually tell the difference between pictures that look right, and pictures that don't, and (2) there are generally knobs that can turn the wrong picture into something that looks right.

I feel for the publican who has a big new widescreen display on the same feed as aging CRT 4x3 sets. Yes, that's a technical challenge. However, since these premises almost always get their pictures from FOXTEL, and since the FOXTEL boxes have always had the cleverness to display a correct picture on any set known to humanity, you'd think that we'd all be able to watch mostly pictures of the correct stretchiness. You'd be wrong. You'd be wrong to the extent that in most pubs the punters are forced to watch sport on a system which has been cleverly set to look horrible on both old AND new screens. That's quite an achievement, although I shouldn't use the word "punter" here without qualifying: public TV sets connected to Sky Racing are always spot on. Clever, that.

Who's to blame for this general state of wrongness? Well, not FOXTEL, Austar, Fox Sports, or the free-to-air engineers, because those people really have thought this through. If the images presented to you look unnaturally anorexic or biggest-loser like, there is (almost certainly) a setting combination which will restore normality. Of course there is also (almost certainly) a battle of wits to be fought between the box and the screen. Believe it or not, TV

manufacturers have perpetrated some seriously poo--taste technology jokes on the public. How about the Bravia setting which stretches the picture at the edges, and squashes it in the middle? Yes, that's one way to avoid black bars at the side, but I defy you to watch tennis when the monitor is adjusted like that. How about the zoom control that gives you every option except undistorted?

Speaking of just plain rude, don't get me started on high priced hotels. Who thinks it's a good idea to buy hundreds of TV sets, spend \$quillion\$ on installation, lock the TV in each guest room to show a stretched centre-cut picture on every channel, and take the "fix it" button off the remote. It would cost less than one TV set's worth of labour to adjust the Pay TV and Free-to-air boxes to something that's mostly right. Maybe even completely right. Except no chain makes that happen (sample: every hotel we stayed at during the Roadshow. Frattly much every hotel I stayed in last year). Hey, hotels: want me to fix that? I'm here, and I'll do it!

The people who are really to blame are those who don't ask for it to be made right. That's consumers like us. You have the power, whether you're in the coffee shop, the pub, the club, or the hotel. Just tell the manager: 'I'll take ten beers and a \$35 steak, PROVIDED you let me adjust the TV so that it's watchable'. A smart manager will agree immediately, on proviso that you wait until after the meal. He knows that by then you're less likely to care, unlikely to remember you made a deal, and will be incapable of finding the back of the set.

There are glimmers of hope. I'm publicly grateful to the airline whose lounge angel trusted me to fix the three sets that were driving me insane, and to the publisher of this magazine who only half-skewed me in public when I did it. The secret truth is that he cares too.



Aerostat

TCOM

I have a new interest, sparked by a casual question to Larry, a US-domiciled mate with whom I've worked on some big convention shows over maybe sixteen years, but of whom I'd never asked the party question: what do you REALLY do? Well, he works for TCOM, maker of some of the world's largest aerostats.

TheMaiz did a quick poll, and nobody at the CX Bunke had heard of the word "aerostat". I hadn't either. To save you the pain of doing an online lookup, an alternative word is "blimp". An aerostat is a fancy balloon, a craft that stays aloft because what's inside it is Lighter Than Air (hence another industry term: LTA). One Wikipedia article describes a humungous aerostat used at the opening of the 2010 Commonwealth Games, and I've been told that an aerostat was used in Sydney during the 2000 Olympics.

Take a squiz at TCOM's site, www.tcompl.com. Be impressed. When Larry first said he did "systems engineering for large balloons", the picture in my mind was like those rubber spheres which carry weather instrumentation. Those are called Radiosondes, and they are typically 2 metres across, with a tiny payload and an 80% chance of floating away,

never to be seen again. Modern aerostats are something else. They are BIG. "Big", in this case, is 71 metres long with a tether that has optical fibres and carries 80kW of three phase power. "Big" is a one-tonne payload, being held over four kilometres up in the sky for days at a time, and with a tether back-tension in the order of 45 tonnes. That's not a typo: one of these balloons is trying to lift the weight of twenty fiveutes. Bugger!

Apart from weird military uses (projects that don't exist, naturally) aerostats do have practical application in live production. Large aerostats have been used to pick up and move objects the size and weight of a tank, ideal for your next product launch. A smaller aerostat - say, half the size of a house - is quiet and easily deployed by two people, which makes for a cool and effective camera platform. Have a look here (<http://bit.ly/GYd5mN>) to see what I mean. Finally, there is the decorative version as with Pink Floyd's pig. Make that many pigs.

I have a heap of completely unreal statistics that might be unleashed in a feature article. For the moment, it's me that is completely blown away.

Be afraid, be very afraid



Ten years ago, the media industry talked about 3D cinema as a curiosity and a rumour. Five years ago we started dissecting what would happen if Avatar didn't work at the box office. Two years ago the Australian industry achieved world firsts with live sports coverage in 3D. This year, real film starts to breathe last gasps as a way movies are brought to your seat.

Now this: "The Pirates! Band of Misfits - in 3D ...and also in 2D in selected cinemas".

Yipes. The traditional flat experience is already being migrated to become the afterthought! I hope you're getting ready for the day when 3D creeps into that corporate gig you've just been asked to plan....

Got a comment, grouch or idea for a story? Bring me up to speed: themaiz@maizeis.nu



biz talk

By Julius Grafton

PPSR upside hard to see Dunn and Bradstreet say it is a good thing. We disagree

"Registering your security interest on the goods you supply or lease will improve the way you manage your business's credit risk", says credit bureau Dunn and Bradstreet.

Putting gloss on the new Australian national personal property security register (PPSR) is a stretch – the system confuses CX and had many online glitches. It also features 'cost recovery' that could throw the federal budget into surplus.

In case you are like the majority of other businesses out there with no or little idea what the PPSR actually does, it is supposed to allow you to 'register' your 'interest' in your own property in one place. Which means you list the stuff your business owns, line by line - at \$3.60 a pop.

'WTF' was the facial expression on almost everyone at my CX Dirty Money Seminars during our Roadshow when I explained PPSR. With 100 of you attending nationally, it was a great chance to see how appallingly implemented this new government initiative has been, while touted as a 'reduction in red tape'.

"In the case that your debtor becomes

bankrupt or is liquidated, your business will still remain a secured creditor - the goods leased will still belong to you", say D & B. Well yes – provided you listed them against the gig.

Examples come to mind. Imagine the Sydney Entertainment Centre bust of 2009 - when Kevin Jacobsen's Arena Management was booted from the venue by the owners, the NSW Government. Had there been rental gear permanently installed, as there often is with-in music venues, under the new PPSR legislation if that equipment was not listed by its rental company owners then the incoming liquidator could simply seize and sell it off.

Xanadu the Musical collapsed in April 2011, and under today's PPSR the equipment within the tent, even the tent itself could have been flogged off by Administrators Con Kokkinos and Paul Burness

from Worrells Solvency and Forensic Accounting.

When the liquidators move in, their phone runs hot with suppliers desperate to remove their equipment from the site. This applies to building sites, just as it does to a venue. Until PPSR, the insolvency guys asked the claimants to do some work to prove what they owned on site. Now they

SO WHAT IS THIS?
The finance industry and the insolvency profession wanted an easier way to (dis)prove ownership

just fire up the PPSR website, and do a quick \$3.80 search. Anyone who has listed their equipment against the site gets their gear back. Unlisted? Forget it.

Same applies to an installation where you haven't yet been paid in full, and the developer or builder goes broke. Tough luck getting anything out of there, unless it is clearly listed on the PPSR.

So this is progress, right?



Personal Property Securities Register



Who needs Construction Industry Induction?

Under the new national Harmonised Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws now in place and coming to all States, it has become apparent that the live performance industry will need to comply with the Australian Government's National Code of Practice for the Construction Industry.

Why? Because the work performed in our industry has been deemed, or has been classed as very similar to certain work practices undertaken in the Construction Industry.

During the process of formulating the new WH&S Legislation, LPA, together with other industry bodies, argued that the Construction Code was too broad and captured work not envisaged under the Code, and therefore should not apply to our or other industries. The arguments failed, and certain elements of that Code and what is termed "High Risk Work" would appear to apply to our industry.

This means any worker undertaking any work carried out in connection with the construction, alteration, conversion, fitting-out, renovation, repair, maintenance, refurbishment, demolition or dismantling of a "structure", will be required to have a Construction Industry Induction, as evidenced by a card or proof from an accredited provider. A "structure" has been given a very broad definition under the Legislation and will capture a lot of work performed in our industry.

Therefore, to ensure proper risk management is undertaken, LPA advises that any worker undertaking work that could be considered as "construction work" or "high risk work" should have the Construction Industry Induction training.

More venues nationwide are now requiring all crew – whether house crew, or visiting contractors – to have this Induction training. The venue's duty of care under the new WHS laws (or the current laws in the States not yet signed to the national harmonised Work Health and Safety legislation) says proper risk management must occur. If an accident arises at a venue, significant penalties can be imposed on the venue, contractor or other duty holder where workers have not been properly inducted.

Live Performance Australia is working with Members to formulate specific live performance induction course that better meets our industry's obligations under the Legislation. LPA will be also seeking advice from industry stakeholders to determine whether a WH&S "Code of Practice" should be developed for the industry.

Until then, any nearby accredited commercial training provider offering Construction Industry Induction can be utilised for training.

• **LPA provides specific advice to members on issues of WHS, Industrial Relations, Awards and other Live Performance workplace and industry issues.**
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....WHAT IS termed "High Risk Work" would appear to apply to our industry.

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The persuasive power of (big) numbers

aceta



Australian Commercial & Entertainment Technologies Association

How big is your industry, how many people are employed and what do you represent? These are often the first questions any association or representative body face when dealing with Government or Government authorities. Often though 'the number' is not always easy to pin point.

Difficult or not, there is a need for ACETA and the industry to deal with Government on a range of issues. Currently these issues include wireless audio transition, RMC labelling and the EESS database, the Personal Properties Security Register (PPSR) and others and always the questions of who are you, what are you worth and what do you want are raised. In truth some of the questions are code for, 'Why should we listen to you?' The answer lies in the persuasive power of numbers.

For ACETA and ACETA members the difficulty in saying we employ this many people and are valued at this many dollars is made more difficult because of a number of factors, principally:

► We are not a single focus industry like mining or motor vehicle manufacture

Easily accessible statistical frameworks do not exist, and

► Most of the numbers we can quote are comparatively small and don't reflect the fact that we are an enabling industry, that is, the products and services we provide enable other significant activities to take place at a much higher value.

Unlike the motor vehicle industry who just make cars and can clearly quote employment and output figures, ACETA members are involved in a number of not always related industries. Broadcast, live music, conventions and meetings, tourism, the building and construction industry are just some of the sectors in which ACETA members play a part, yet often there is little or nothing connecting these industries to each other except for the fact that they use audio, lighting or staging equipment products and services.

Only when viewed as providers of enabling products and services can ACETA members represent, in economic terms, their true value to the community. Only then can you see that the value of this industry is in fact many times greater than the sum of its parts.

For example, as part of the wireless audio transition issue the Australian Wireless Audio Group (AWAG) commissioned an

economic report by specialist economists Windsor Place Consulting on the value to the community of the humble radio microphone. What they provided to us was a revelation.

The direct value to the industry of wireless microphones runs to a few tens of millions of dollars per year. Not especially exciting. However, the economic activity *enabled* by those products in the wider Australian community runs into the tens of billions. How can that be? Well consider the role wireless microphones play in just the following seven sectors.

SECTORS	
Industry	Quoted Annual income (A\$ Billions)
Broadcast	\$4.9 ¹
Live performance	\$1.3 ² (accounting for 17 million tickets sold)
Fitness industry	\$0.89 ²
Musical Theatre	\$0.62 ⁴
Film and cinema	\$1.59 ⁵
Pub, Tavern and Bar business	\$11.1 ⁶ (includes 194,769 paid performances)
Theme Parks	\$0.28 ⁷
TOTAL	\$20.68

¹ Broadcast Australia, 2011

² Live Performance Australia, 2011

³⁻⁷ Untethering the Microphone, Windsor Place Consulting, 2010

These seven areas of activity alone represent around \$20 billion of the \$32 billion in annual economic activity identified as being enabled by wireless audio products in the Windsor Place Report. They also found that as many as 130,000 people employment was directly dependent or related to the use of these devices. That is before we consider the social benefit these products bring to education, worship and recreation.

The facts are that without these devices these sectors either could not operate at all or could not deliver the experiences they do on the scale that they are now capable of. (Tried running a 9,000 delegate international conference without at least a few wireless microphones?)

So, given that every story has to have a moral, what is the moral of this story?

Simple. That as ACETA continues to develop a statistical framework for the commercial entertainment technologies industry we need to think large. In truth our industry value is much greater than the sum of its parts. The sales, service, installation, manufacturing and manufacturing IP (along with any other activities the industry is directly involved in) will at some point in the future come to have a specific value. That number is likely to fall somewhere north of \$500 million but probably south of \$1 billion. Consider that only as a starting point.

As the wireless audio example shows,

**IN TRUTH
SOME OF
the questions
are code for,
'Why should
we listen to
you?'**

what we import, manufacture, sell and service is just the tip of the iceberg. How and where those products and services are used and what activities they enable is where the true value of our industry lies.

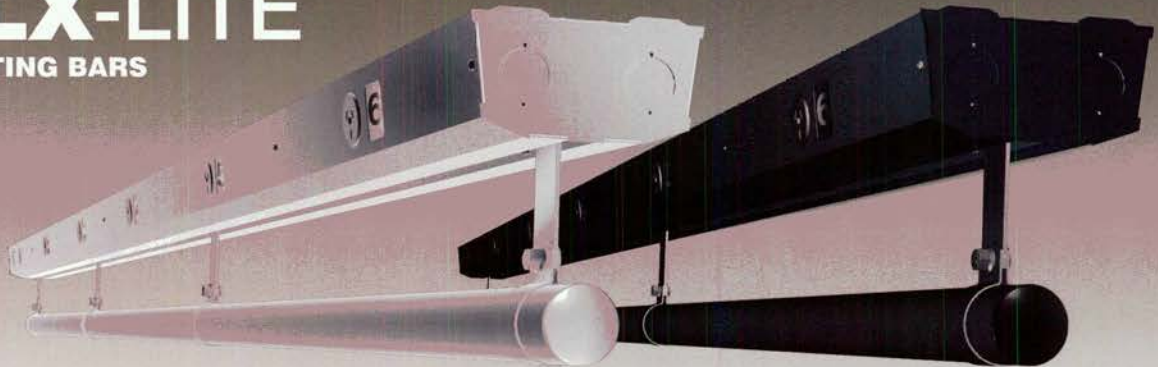
Some readers might at this point recall the often quoted Mark Twain line, 'there are three kinds of lies - lies, damn lies and statistics!'

In other contexts this might be true but for ACETA it is simply a recognition of the persuasive power of (big) numbers.

ACETA is currently developing a statistical framework to provide the industry with reliable data for use by members and when dealing with Government and other key stakeholders and potential partners.

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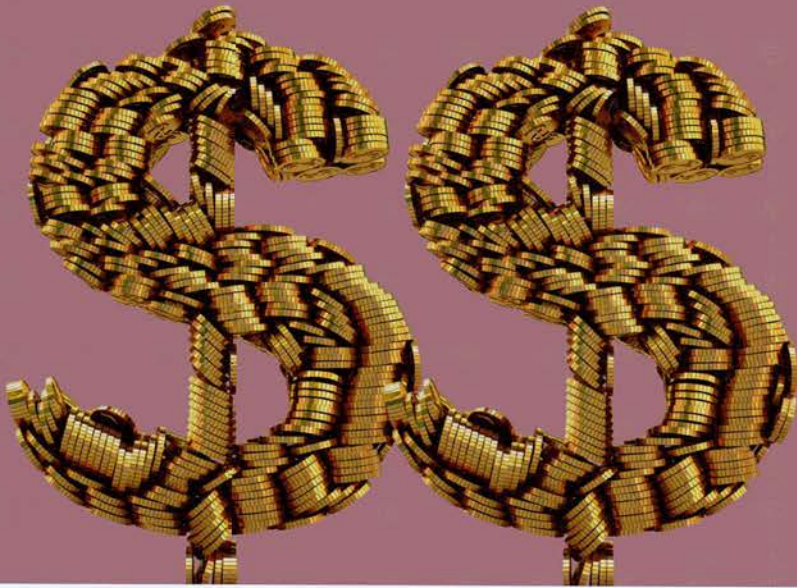
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Getting Paid

part 2



By Paul Matthews

Any PA or AV contractors out there might get disillusioned into thinking that your business is either in trades or retail – or perhaps a combination of both. But in reality in this biz your biggest worry every day isn't necessarily fixing a customer's installation or selling them some new gear – it's getting there.

A third of your life as a "Journeyman" (as we're called in the UK) will be spent behind the wheel of a vehicle either getting to or from your customers either to quote jobs, do them or follow up after they're done. You're not running a PA business. You're running a transport business – and a good deal of your costs are going to be tied up in not buying gear or paying employees but getting them to your customers.

Given the importance of transport to our industry it's surprising that a great deal more time and magazine space isn't devoted to the subject of trucks. Everyone knows there's two types out there. Are you a Van Man or Ute Guy? Whilst the finer points of choosing what vehicle to use are generally down to personal choice, how you get them and what to do with them once you have them is all standard business practice. Bad choices will cost you dearly – especially in an industry where missed deadlines can be very costly!

To Buy or Lease? Well amazingly that's quite a simple choice. If you're setting up a production that will end in six months or serving a customer with a finite life span (such as a large building job which will one day end) then you LEASE. If you're in it for

DONT KID YOURSELF. When you're in business you are running a fleet (even if it's only two utes). One vehicle is never enough.

the long haul, want to pay off the mortgage and retire with anything at the end then you BUY.

New or Pre Loved? While the temptation in business is always to buy straight off the show room floor, consider the many advantages of going for a "nearly new" vehicle. Looking at trucks with less than 80k on the clock and less than three years on the nameplate is generally the "sweet spot" for picking up a tradesman bargain. In most cases there'll be some left over manufacturers' warranty still to run, a full set of log books and if you're lucky – other essentials like ladder racks, ute canopies or van kits.

Don't kid yourself. When you're in business you are running a fleet (even if it's only two utes). One vehicle is never enough. At some stage you have to allow for each vehicle to be off the road for repairs, maintenance or unexpected and unfortunate accidents. If you don't size your fleet correctly then you will waste enormous amounts of time and money when you are separated

from your customers by a long black bit of bitumen and no way of crossing it.

Many small businesses buy "brand new" because they hope it will result in a hassle free work day with no downtime to vehicles off the road. The trade off is that when you buy "new" then you have a big monthly repayment clawing funds out of your bank account – regardless of whether the truck does 2400km or 24k. If work slows down and your costs don't.. then guess what's next?

Truth is, there really is no reason why you can't have that same level of reliability from an older fleet – as long as you're willing to understand that with older vehicles you need to set aside some of that monthly repayment (that you would otherwise be paying on a new truck) for maintenance to keep the old one reliable. You don't get something for nothing by running older trucks. You just get a level of security against work slowing down.. and work ALWAYS slows down!

Find a good workshop but don't ever just throw them the keys and say "fix it". Take a personal interest in what goes on "under the bonnet". Be prepared to replace wearable parts well before they break. More than 80% of roadside failures are caused by busted hoses, belts or electrics. Once the truck hits 150k, change all the rubber parts (hoses, belts etc). If one bulb blows change both!

Don't wait for things like the battery to go dead at 6am one frosty morning when you have a crucial 7am callout for a major customer. Change it at 3 years even if the old one's still good. Put the old (but still

OK) hoses and belts behind the back seat – they'll save your arse if you have a roadside failure in future years.

As the van gets older you need to be ever considering whether it's time to upgrade or if maybe a reconditioned motor might be just the thing to give you another few years reliable motoring. Don't forget the interior. It's amazing how many people are willing to part with \$2000 for a reco motor but balk at spending \$300 for a full detail which will leave your truck looking and feeling like it just drove off the showroom floor and add years to it's service life.

Don't underestimate the savings to be had by converting to LPG. At around \$4k per vehicle you'll get a payback after about three years – after which you can laugh at your competitors on the other side of the pump. LPG conversion is another good reason to consider "pre loved" because many brand new vehicles will have their warranty voided if you convert them from day one.

Unlike the van itself, LPG conversions hold their value. Even when the van depreciates way down to \$4k it's really still worth 8k with LPG. A seasoned tradie never uses Glass's Guide to value their well used steed. That's because the truck is invariably worth much more to the business than it's basic sell value. Extras like LPG, Ute bodies, Ladder racks and Van Kits mean that the cost of the extras can easily outstrip the value of the vehicle itself.

UNLIKE THE VAN ITSELF, LPG conversions hold their value. Even when the van depreciates....

Where many bean counters would write off an old clunker, a tradie will often meet the cost of major renovations to an old truck because the cost and bother of replacing it together with adding all the extras, isn't viable. It's often better to gamble with a vehicle that has a known history (such as your own) than jump across to another truck of similar age. Don't forget – maintenance is 100% deductible whereas a new truck has to be depreciated over at least three years.

Make no mistake – if you're buying a truck for business then you either want a new one, a "near new" one or an old one with a well known maintenance history. More often than not it means keeping your old one. Be prepared however that the day will eventually come when it's time to ditch that 35 year old HZ Holden Flatbed.

Hopefully by the time you do, your business should have saved enough so you can walk into the showroom with a suitcase full of cash and buy your new truck outright without giving a cent to the banks.

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all gone to sleep then maybe the place was still in reasonable shape for when the manager came to check it.

I wandered into the main room, and my stomach sank to my knees. It looked like the last days of Pompeii. There were bodies everywhere, spread face down on the floor, curled up in the corners, one even with his legs on the couch and his head underneath. I rolled him out from under it. The bleary face of Johnny snored back at me.

I looked around the room. There was beer everywhere; up the walls, sprayed on the ceiling, dribbling into the carpet from upturned cans. Every inch of the carpet was covered in empty cans, cigarette stubs, the two empty bottles of Jack Daniels, and a couple of half eaten pizzas.

I turned to Wally.

"Shit, what a mess. How is this ever going to get cleaned up so we can get paid and get the f**k out of here?" I asked him.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"That's not all," he said. "Have a look at this." And he pointed into the hallway. There was a hole the size of a basketball in the plasterboard wall, at about head height, and another in the bathroom door, at about foot height.

"The boys were really having a good time last night," he said. "They were playing footy in the hall with one of the Jack Daniels bottles, Joe slipped and head butted the wall. It made the whole place shake so they all came and had a go. Then the wall caved in.

"But what about the door?" I said, "Was that the goal?"

"No," said Wally. "Mick was in the dunny with one of the sheilas and Phil wanted to have a piss. Mick wouldn't open the door and yelled at Phil to piss in the corner, so he did. Then he got real shitty and kicked the door in." He stared at me blankly, as if this was the most normal behavior in the world.

I went back into the lounge and strook Johnny.

"Wake up," I yelled. Johnny opened his eyes and coughed so deeply I thought his

lungs were going to leap out and wriggle around on the floor. He looked around the room.

"Hey, bit of a mess, isn't it?" he grinned, his hand searching on the floor for a full can. "Wow, bit of a party last night. Jeez, my head hurts. Have you seen a beer around anywhere?"

"We've got to get this place cleared up or we're not going to get paid, Johnny. I need the money for some juice to get back, or we'll be stranded here."

The reality of the situation slowly filtered into his brain. He creaked to his feet and went around the room, kicking the rest of the band into awakesness.

"Come on, get this place cleared up, you messy bastards," he yelled. They shuffled slowly into action, sweeping the cans under the couch and peeling

the pizza slices off the carpet. Wally wiped the walls with someone's t-shirt and I grabbed Johnny.

"Look, I'll come with you to see the manager, and we'll see if he'll just pay me before he checks the room, then Wally and I can piss off before the shit hits the fan."

We went and got the manager, but strangely enough, he insisted on at least making a quick check of the rooms before handing over the money.

"I suppose you boys had a couple of drinks last night before turning in, eh?" he

chatted as we walked across the car park. Yep, just a few, I thought, only about half the contents of the bottle shop!

Johnny saw this as an opening.

"Yes, we did have a couple of cans last night. We didn't know what to do with the empties so we've stacked them in a corner of the lounge."

"Did you? That's great, boys. It makes things so much easier for the cleaners when you help us out like that."

We walked into the lounge. I couldn't believe it. Things didn't look so bad. Wally had piled some of the guys' bags on the middle of the floor so you couldn't see the stains and burns on the carpet. There must have been a heap of cans stuffed under the couch and chairs, because there was

a neat pile of about fifteen in one corner of the room.

The manager walked through into the hall. Now he's going to see the bloody holes, I thought. Joe stood in the hallway. A large cowboy hat on his head obscured the gaping hole in the plasterboard behind him.

"Hi there, mate," he smiled at the manager. "Like a slice of pizza?" And he proffered the box containing the dried up furry slices from the night before.

"No thanks, son," said the manager, "You save it for the trip home."

He turned down towards the bathroom. As soon as Phil saw him he dropped his bag on the ground and knelt down in front of the hole in the door, busily appearing to be doing up his shoelaces. Not easy, really, considering he wore elastic sided boots!

"G'day, mate," he said, "How're you going" The manager nodded to him and walked past.

I was stunned. It was like a drawing room comedy at the theatre, people coming in and out of doorways, laughing, smiling. Maybe we would get away with it, after all. The manager stopped at the front door.

"Well boys, it's not too bad," he said. "Looks like you've taken care of the place all right."

"Oh, it's a pleasure staying in such nice clean rooms as these," said Johnny, greasing up to him. "We always do our best to look after them."

The manager handed over a bundle of notes.

"Here you go then boys. See you next time" and he walked back towards the main building. I turned to Wally and Johnny.

"Shit, that was close" I breathed. Johnny grinned.

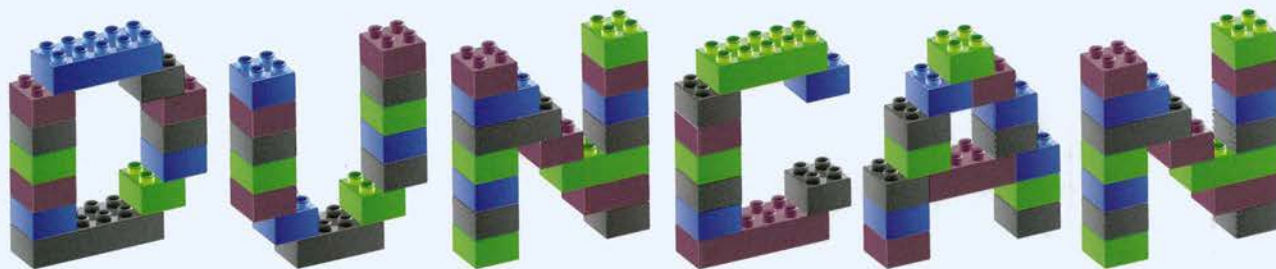
"Ah, no worries. I knew everything would be OK. I don't know what you were worrying about. She'll be right. Here, there's your money. No problems"

I found it hard to share his optimism, but I grabbed the money and ran to the truck, Wally and his Esky in hot pursuit.

"What a gig, eh?" he beamed. "What a great gig."

I started the truck and headed back to Melbourne. I'd had enough excitement for one weekend.

THERE WAS BEER EVERYWHERE; up the walls, sprayed on the ceiling, dribbling into the carpet from upturned cans.



BEST OF FRY! DUNC WAS AWAY IN GERMANY AT PRESSTIME.

FRY



The Windsor Castle

© 2012 Duncan Fry

The boys in the Jerries loved a drink. I could quite believe that any of the pubs that hired them would lose far more money in giving the band free drinks than they would take across the bar. Five guys in the band and they all drank like fishes.

We had a gig at a hotel in Portland. Wally and I left early, with his inevitable Esky of beer, and got to the pub mid-afternoon. After getting everything set up, we went to find the band and crew accommodation.

In the past this hotel had obviously had a very hard time with bands and their crews, because they had created a separate little area for them to stay, away from all the other guests. For some reason hotel guests resented their sleep being interrupted by shouts, loud music and the squeals of drunk girls.

The pub manager showed us over to this special accommodation. It was a block of rooms totally isolated from the rest of the building, right in the centre of the car park.

"This is it, boys," the manager beamed at us. "We call this the Windsor Castle, cause it's fit for a king"

We looked inside. While not what I would have termed palatial it was certainly clean, and a lot neater than most band rooms. You could even see that there was a pattern on the carpet, and I couldn't see a cigarette burn in it anywhere.

The manager was proud as a dog with a bone.

"We've just had the place completely redecorated," he said. "I know you boys will look after it, but just in case, I won't pay you until I've checked the place in the morning!"

Well, I wasn't so sure about how the place would look in the morning. I'd seen the band unwind after a gig and it was not a sight for the faint hearted.

nus. This was possibly their major mistake, as the boys already had a slab cooling on ice for the post gig rap. This meant they now had twice as many tinnies, and when I saw two of the guys lurch in with Jack Daniels in one hand and a band moll in the other, I could see that they were planning to make a night of it.

I couldn't bear to watch. I had a quick beer with them, plugged in my ear plugs, and headed off to bed. I listened to the

THE MANAGER WAS PROUD AS A DOG WITH A BONE.

"We've just had the place completely redecorated," he said. I know you boys will look after it, but just in case, I won't pay you until I've checked the place in the morning!"

Still, I reasoned, they would want to get paid just as much as I did, so perhaps they would ease up on the mayhem just for one night.

I bailed up the guys as soon as they arrived and filled them in on the situation.

"Yeah, no worries" they grunted in assent, grinding their cigarettes into the carpet. "We'll make sure the place is tidy enough for the old bastard."

The management of the pub was quite happy with the way the gig went, and gave the band a slab of tinnies as a bo-

sounds of merriment for a short while, then drifted off to sleep.

Good old reliable Wally woke me at eight in the morning. Surprisingly enough for him, he had grabbed a couple of hours sleep, he said, when the guys in the band flaked out.

This sounded quite promising. If they'd

Continued Page 65

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