



CX107 SEPTEMBER 2015 \$5.99

**Roadie Loyalty Costs
An Australian Roadie
In The Golden Era**

**Not Certified
Staging Company Exposed**

**Music Pirates Set Sail
How Music Got Free**

**Audio/Systems Engineer
Suzy Mucciarone**

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GEARBOX REVIEWS: MA Lighting dot2 • BOSE F1 System • High End Systems SolaSpot Pro 1500
• RØDELink Fimmaker Kit • JBL SRX800 Series
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• Australis Pro Audio • Bidding War for Staging Connections • Eric Robinson Honoured

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CX107 2015. DIGITAL EDITION

EDITORIAL BY JULIUS GRAFTON

MEDIA IS MESSY

At a party it's best not to say you are a reporter. The response is the same as if you work for the tax office. But some things never change. Fr' instance, I talk to someone, they mouth off, and within the hour some lawyer calls up to beat me up over the phone.

This always has the opposite effect. What was a fishing exercise to see whether there was any fire under the smoke, turns into a thorough investigation to see what kind of fire is actually burning. Almost always there is a story there.

The rush to lawyer up serves only the legal profession who, as I have written elsewhere recently, LOVE clients like this.

Client: 'This idiot from CX Magazine is going to write a lot of lies about me. Make them stop!'

Lawyer: 'Of course! Who are they, and which lies are they concocting against us?'

Client: 'All of them! Just do something.....'

Lawyer: 'I'm on it!'

THE CALL

The smaller the firm, the more aggressive. The big partner law firms are a lot smoother. They share the same DNA as the wheenie (\$300/hour) but they have nothing to prove. They usually allocate a junior partner (\$500/hour) to make the call.

Lawyer (aggressive voice): 'You've spoken to our client. What is this about?'

CX: 'We put questions to them. They haven't responded satisfactorily.'

Lawyer (snapping, like Roger the underfed Rottweiler): 'What questions?'

So it goes for at least six minutes and one second. They do this so the call time rolls over to a second six minute block. You see, lawyers charge you in six minute chunks, even if they haven't done six minute's work. Thus the call itself has earned them \$60 to \$100.

Including the angry customer call in the first place, they've already earned several hundred for less than 13 minutes work. The six minute block, when leveraged like they teach the interns, can earn you ten hours pay for eight actual hours of 'work'.

If there is a deadline (we always supply one) then they reply at five minutes to deadline.

THE LETTER

Inevitably by fax, email and registered mail comes The Letter. I have a file full of them spanning the last quarter century, and most are quite amusing. The big firms (Collins or Philip Street) put more effort in. Typically the letter is at least three pages.

Every legal letter is work-shopped with the aggrieved client, so those six minute blocks are whizzing through. I'm told the going price for a letter is at least \$500. One of them was so brutal my P.A. at the time broke into tears. I gave her some tea and sympathy, transpires she was a little delicate.

I always do the lawyer the courtesy of replying. I do it one sentence at a time, each sentence in a different email. This way they can charge their client a separate block to open and read each email.

I am overjoyed to get a reply, because then I can reply too.

Now before you rush to judge me, I do all this fully aware that should their client actually have a case against us, then I will ultimately pay all their costs as well. So I am in effect sharing the love.

- Love Julius



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NEWS

CX INDUSTRY NEWS



Stage Roof Row Certification Questioned

Taree (NSW) production supplier Hamish McDonald has confirmed his stage roof is not certified. Trading as Paradyme Production Studios, Hamish also works with fellow NSW north coast operator Jim Bird from Wingham. Together they are known as Aurora Show FX.

AURORA'S stage roof system is based on industry standard ProLyte components which were purchased second hand. They have supplied outdoor stages for festival and outdoor events around the North Coast for several years.

Their client documentation included several Policy and Procedure documents, but no bad weather or emergency procedures. There was an engineer signoff on a series of identical modules used as a portable theatre stage. But nothing about the roof system(s).

Hamish was not in the mood when CX called to talk about just how the stage roof is certified. "I don't understand why I have a magazine from Sydney calling me about this. I'm trying to run a business here, I've had Workcover out three times, they are the authority on this. Why would you want to publish a story about me?"

He went on to allege that rival operators had been complaining. "I'm a very small company on the coast trying to do business. We're just a couple of guys under 30."

Some minutes after our call his father Malcolm McDonald, a Sydney lawyer, called to warn us off. Then Hamish supplied us a series of TUV Certificates written in German. These appear to relate to individual ProLyte components alone.

But Roderick Van Gelder from Sydney firm Stage Safety says any stage roof system must be certified as a system; with components clearly identifiable so that concerned parties (such as hirers) can see the certification paperwork is relevant to what is built. For example the Engineer's Certificate will detail the measurements and types of beams and columns, with loadings and wind ratings.

"Council should know what it is that is being built", he says. "Always we should err on the safe side and not jump to conclusions". He says if clear system certification is not supplied, then an engineer must attend setup to sign off.

Workcover inspector Scott Allman did visit Jim Bird in Taree at least once, in April 2014 and directed that an engineer inspect the truss system. Yet CX was not supplied with any evidence of this by deadline.

CX asked Hamish (and lawyer Malcolm) whether any engineer had inspected the ProLyte components to ensure they were genuine and not knockoffs, and that they were still fit for purpose – having been bought second hand.



We requested Engineer Certification for the components as a stage roof system. At deadline a structural engineer from Taree, Chris Venn-Browne called to say he had been commissioned to produce Certification. "Based on what they sent me I'll have to go and inspect the system. They will set it up for me", he said. "Strictly speaking the concept and design needs to be Certified, and each installation Certified separately."

"They were hoping you would not run the story".



Caroline Mary Fitzmaurice-Grafton

CX and ENTECH co-founder dead at 59

After battling brain cancer for 11 months, Caroline Fitzmaurice-Grafton died quietly at sunset on Monday 27th of July. She was at home in Sydney, with her new husband Phil Reynolds and extended family.

CAROLINE was born in 1956, one of six children in a working class family. Her dad Frank Fitzmaurice survived the atomic bomb at Nagasaki as a war slave for Mitsubishi. The bomb was targeted at the factory, he was inside a brick latrine at the time and wandered the radioactive wasteland for days before rescue.

At 18 she married Sound Engineer Colin Ford and had a daughter, Sarah Jane in 1976. Four years later she moved in with Julius Grafton, they married and daughter Jessica was born in 1986. Through the 1980's they ran Graftons Sound and Lighting, and established Australian Monitor.

After selling out and moving to the country, they entered publishing – initially with the Jands house magazine Channels, and then in 1992 launched Connections Magazine. ENTECH followed in 1994.

Caroline was well known as the face of the business and travelled frequently. In 2000 she and Julius split, she sold her share of the business to Julius. She left the industry and ran a book keeping business from Artarmon until her premature death.

Her funeral was very well attended by friends, family and industry representatives who remembered her for her energy, enthusiasm, and larger than life presence. Her best friends Ruth and Rod McKinnon gave eulogies. A wake then ran appropriately late into the weeknight.

Sadly her funeral was the year following her marriage to long time partner Phil Reynolds, the love of her life, who nursed her through her terrible illness. The service was conducted by her son in law, Pastor Nathan McLean (married to Jess), who had also conducted her marriage. Her ashes will be scattered in Koh Samui (Thailand) where she was married last year.

Caroline died just months before the 21st anniversary of ENTECH, and the 25th anniversary of the publishing company she co-founded. Survived by sisters Fran, Cathy and Geraldine, brothers Tony and Patrick, and mother Monica. Daughters Jess and Sarah. Grand children Mikayla and Buddy.

She will never be forgotten.



Australis Pro Audio launches

with Lab, Tannoy, Lake, Turbo and Behringer

AUSTRALIS MUSIC GROUP has launched Australis Pro Audio as an integral part of the firm, sharing its General Manager Kurt Schramm, accounting, marketing and logistics functions. Australis gained Lab, Tannoy and Lake brands when TC Group International (owner of the Tannoy and Lab.gruppen brands) was recently sold to Music Group (owner of the Behringer and Turbosound brands). Music Group is

rolling out an international strategy (called One Music Group) under which they focus the distribution of all their brands through one company in each territory. Hills Limited (and APG prior) performed well with these brands.

David Kelly (ex Hills and APG) heads Pro Audio sales as Business Development Manager. Nik Buchanan (ex Hills and APG) is Product Manager for Pro Audio

Brands. Peter Costello (ex Hills and APG) is Victorian Area Manager - Pro Audio. Ben Ruut (ex Audio Sales and Marketing ASM and before that Australis Music Group) is Product Manager for Behringer.

Australis have also increased resources in their Service Department and Call Centre.



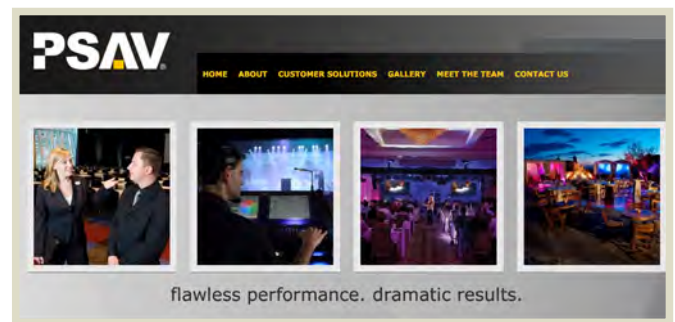
Bidding War for Staging Connections Freeman Face Down PSAV Challenge

At presstime it appeared leading US event supply company Freeman would emerge as winner in the takeover battle for top Australian AV production firm Staging Connections Limited. Previously another US firm PSAV had announced it entered into 'agreement' to buy the firm.

Controlled by affiliates of Goldman Sachs, PSAV had placed an offer before the Staging Connections board. As Staging are a public company, and as the offer was a scheme of arrangement, consent from ASIC and a court is required. This process left the door open to a counter offer, which came from Freeman Company. Freeman are family owned and operated.

Staging announced Freeman would acquire the firm, then PSAV counter bid in August. The winning bidder can expect to contract the sale in October, but CX understands Freeman are almost certain to win the prize.

Staff are more enthusiastic about Freeman, possibly because PSAV are in the grip of a merchant bank. Staging Connections has similarly been bank controlled in recent times. Both firms rank 3.3 on employee review site Glassdoor, with Freeman's CEO better rated than PSAV's.



Eric Robinson Honoured Announces Retirement

Live Performance Australia honoured Eric Robinson, CEO of JPJ Audio and Jands Production Services (JPS), with the 2015 Sue Nattrass Award at the Helpmann Awards in July.

ERIC has been the CEO of JPJ Audio and Jands Production Services (JPS) since 1970 and his experience encompasses all aspects of sound reinforcement, lighting, rigging, large screen projection and special effects.

Throughout his 45 years' in the industry Eric has been responsible for the technical production management and staging of some of Australia's most admired events and festivals. These events range from early tours by Elton John, ABBA and Fleetwood Mac in the 1970s, and major outdoor events such as Sound Relief, Australia Day Live, Mushroom 25th Anniversary, V Festival, Rumba and Big Day Out. Jands is also well known for its work in the theatre and has been acclaimed for its role in a range of productions, including Beauty and the Beast, The Rocky Horror Show, The King And I, and Lion King.



Eric considers the company's in-house training scheme, which has been running for over 25 years and has ensured his staff are recognised globally for their technical prowess and

professionalism, to be one of his greatest achievements.

Accepting the award on stage at the Capitol Theatre, Eric said he has retired to Port Douglas and is battling cancer.

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DP7



Photo of Anthony Jones, Pink Martini

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Australian Distributor: Jands
www.jands.com.au or (02) 9582 0909

Barco
NRC-200

The Barco NRC-200 networked room compositor is the heart of Barco's modular networked collaboration solution for meeting and training rooms. The NRC-200 receives and processes up to eight input sources and can drive two screens of up to UHD (4k) resolution. Both screens are controlled by a user interface on a commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) touch-enabled PC and can show completely independent content. A ClickShare CSC system is used to connect laptops, tablets and smartphones. Optionally, AV-to-IP encoders can be added to connect non-networked sources.



Australian Distributor: Barco Systems
www.barco.com or (03) 9646 5833



JBL
Control HST

The new JBL Control HST utilises JBL's patent-pending Hemispherical Soundfield Technology to achieve extremely wide coverage of the listening space, while eliminating the primary wall reflection that tends to cause inconsistent sound when speakers are attached to a wall. The patent-pending design includes a wall-facing woofer, two horizontally splayed tweeters, a wall bracket that spaces the speaker the required distance from the wall, and a tapered cabinet that provides proper loading and dispersion of the sound. Rated to 100 Watts, the Control HST includes a 60W 70V/100V multi-tap transformer. Connections are made via a 4-pin phoenix-type removable locking connector which also includes loop-thru terminals for connecting in parallel to another speaker.

Australian Distributor: Jands
www.jands.com.au or (02) 9582 0909

AKG
C314

The C314 is the latest sibling from one of the industry's most widely used studio and stage microphone families. It includes four selectable polar patterns, an overload detection LED, and uses the same one-inch dual diaphragm capsule as the C414 XLS. For stereo recordings, every factory-matched pair of C314s is created from thousands of individual microphones selected by AKG's computer-aided matching method. The result is the highest possible correlation over the microphones entire frequency range and virtually identical sensitivity.



Australian Distributor: Hills
www.hills.com.au or 1800 720 000

AKG
DMS800

Successor to the DMS700 V2, the new DMS800 digital wireless microphone system adds Dante and AES/EBU digital outputs, improved design and mechanics for the DHT800 handheld transmitter, and interchangeable microphone heads. With network remote control and monitoring available over HiQnet, the DMS800 also features digital wireless audio transmission, a 150 MHz ultra-wide frequency range, and 512 bit encryption.



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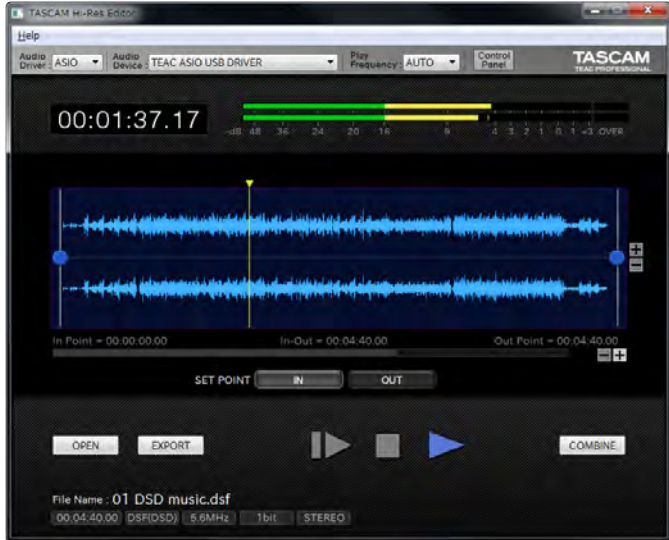
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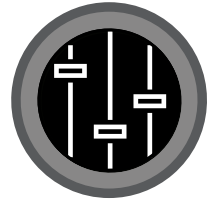
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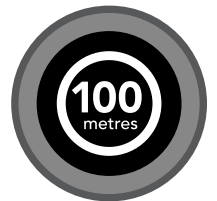
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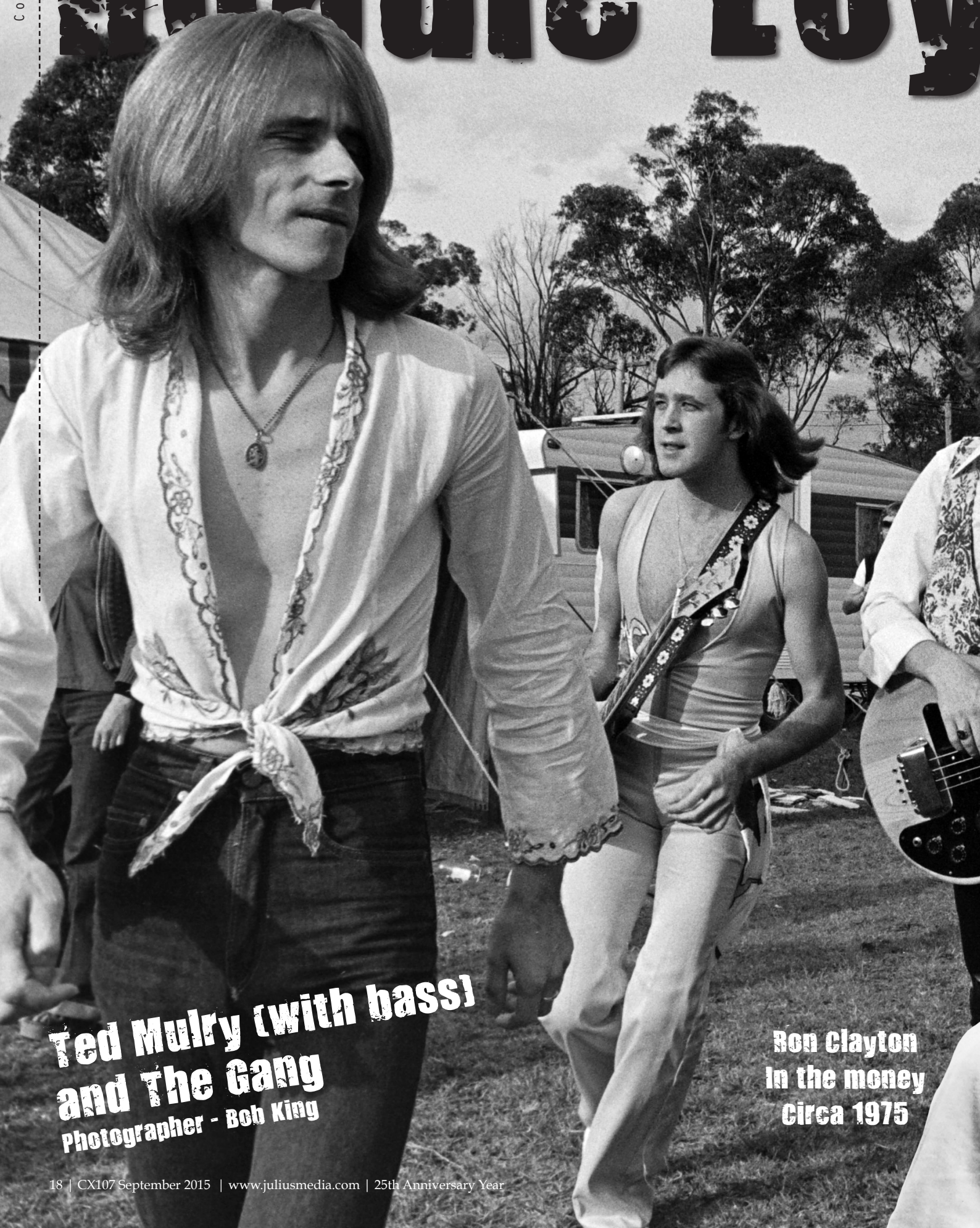
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**Ted Mulry (with bass)
and The Gang**
Photographer - Bob King

Ron Clayton
In the money
Circa 1975

loyalty costs

Ron Clayton Tells

BY JULIUS GRAFTON

RON CLAYTON has written a book about being an Australian roadie through the golden era of rock. It is a gloriously unfiltered tale, with references to aboriginals, homosexuals, nuns, groupies, blondes, the disabled, and of course sex and drugs. Being self published you can do this. But more importantly it is a historical novel, probably more than he intended.

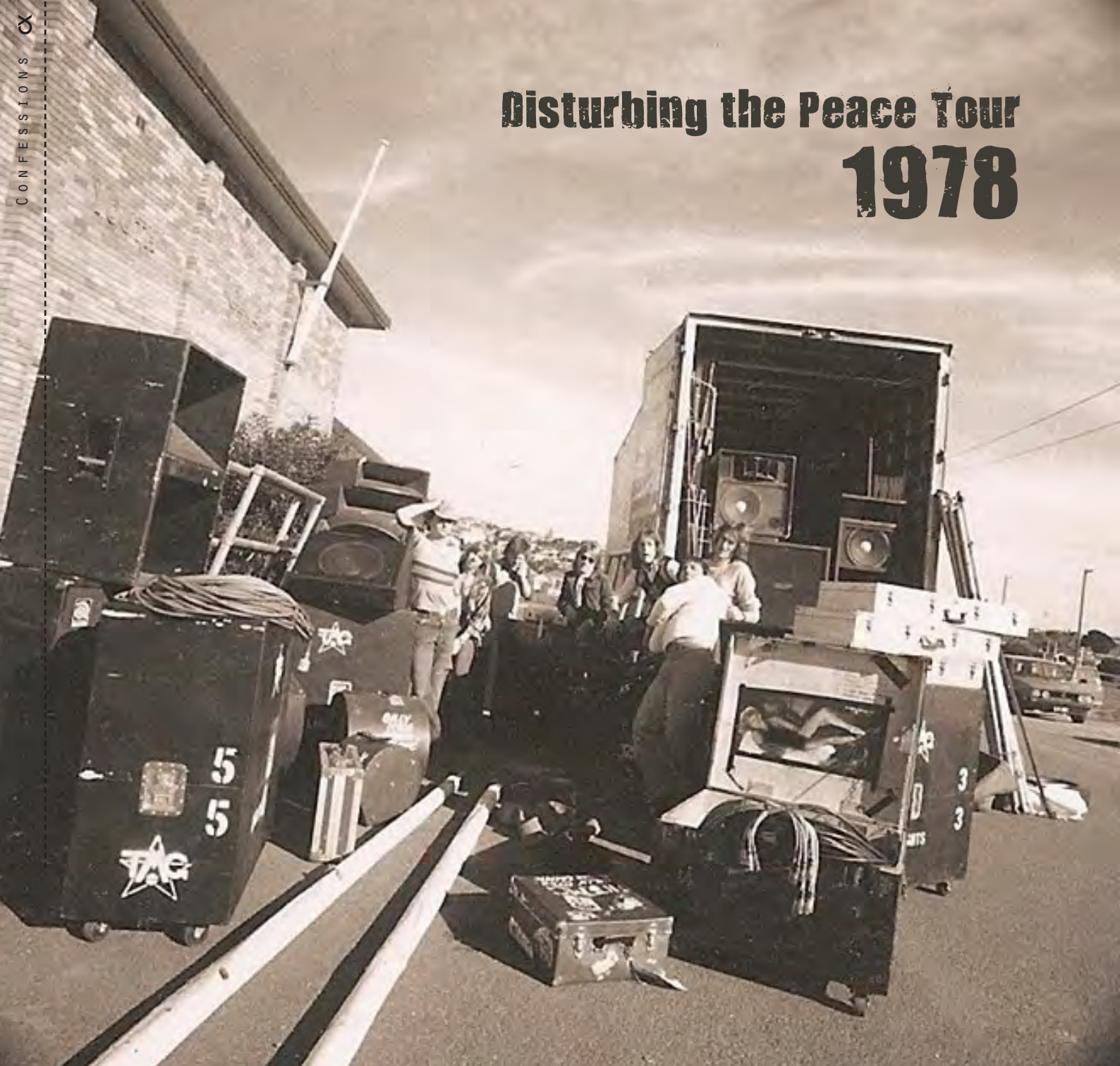
'It's a Roadies Job - may contain traces of nuts' came about after Ron sank into depression in 2013.

His entire working life was devoted to one band, Ted Mulry Gang (TMG) and he is probably the only Australian roadie from the 1970's until Ted died in 2001 to have mostly worked for just one band.

The band exploited Ron, ripped him off badly, and used him – although he doesn't say this. Yet he is devoted to them, especially the late Ted Mulry. The book strongly argues Ted was mistreated by Alberts, the iconic label. Ron says they sidelined Ted in favor of Vanda and Young. Whatever the reality, Ted Mulry had his time in the sun, touring and selling Platinum



Disturbing the Peace Tour 1978



for much of the mid 1970's. He was without doubt a prolific and successful songwriter.

This is a book about the struggles of road crew life, and it is deadly accurate since many named within can attest. In some parts you could be forgiven for thinking it was a work of fiction. But it is factual.

Ron has a delightful writing style. He also has a sharp memory and presumably was a prolific diarist. Malcolm Young (AC/DC) was in an early version of the band that became TMG – Velvet Underground. "He worked as a sewing machine mechanic at bra maker Hestia, which he said stands for 'Holds Every Sized Tit in Australia'. On one of those visits to the Young household, his 14 year old younger brother Angus didn't seem to be very friendly not just to us but indeed to Malcolm". This jives with those who knew the Young brothers in those days.

The story covers the remarkable rock era from the mid 1970's. TMG became one of the top earning

bands in the industry, yet at the height of their success ended a year where they played 200 gigs in debt. Ron had progressed from being the sole roadie who did everything to a kind of assistant manager role.

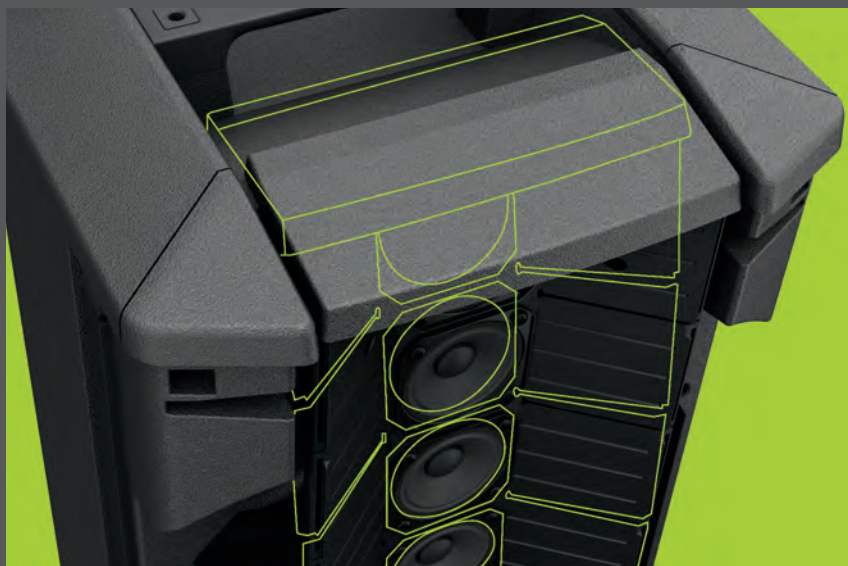
Australia then was quite different – Queensland required permits to carry musical equipment over its border. Each state collected Road Tax from trucks. Venues did not have three phase so an electrician hooked up and disconnected at the end of a gig. Venue attendants wore uniforms and were often hostile to band crew.

In 1977 Ron crossed a line and borrowed money secured against his home to support the band. His wife ran the fan club, and between tours he was hiring out the truck, crew and production to help keep everything afloat.

He was taking all the risk for no reward. He bypassed a Tasmanian promoter and booked the gigs himself, almost tripling the take, but then racking up unforeseen

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costs. Thus followed a lesson in band management. He was the only guy the band could actually trust.

By 1980 the band was broke again, a manager (named in the book - and not Roger Davies) hadn't paid bills, and Ron would end up sued by repair shops, an airline, and a car hire firm. The new truck was repossessed.

Ron paid off the bands debts for years and then in 1985 almost unbelievably guaranteed a loan to buy a new lighting desk, and a new mixer. He was in debt on behalf of Ted Mulry for almost 20 years.

The band originally had Ron as an equal member, he drove them in a converted Toyota Coaster bus, band up front and gear behind. In 1975 his 20% split was earning him \$300 a week, which was well more than the average wage. It allowed him to buy a home unit.

The equality quickly faded.

Things changed fast as the hit records started rolling in, and without complaining about it in the book, Ron was consigned to the crew or assigned to personal assistant status for The Ted. Late night commandments to join Ted at clubs for drinks were always obeyed. Ron's diet at the time is detailed - baby food, chips, baked beans, soft drinks. It is a wonder he survived.

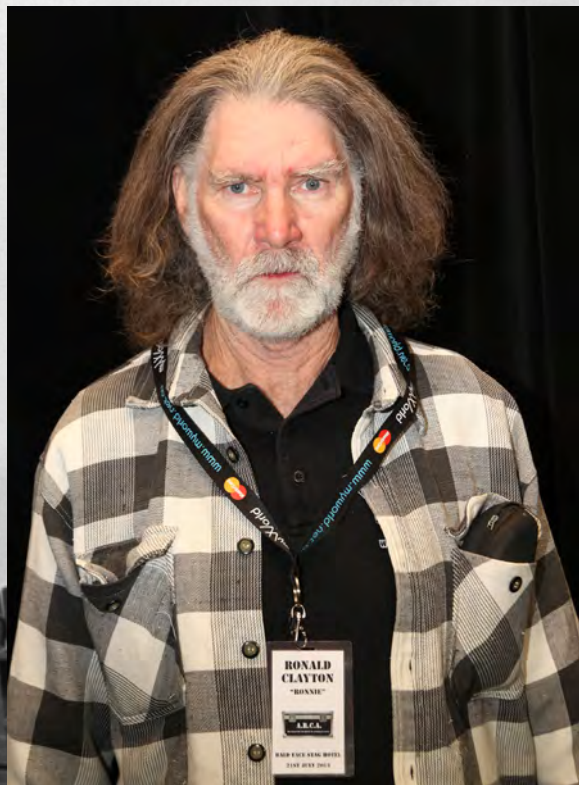
The book is best when describing the daily grind of road life, and also serves fans of Ted Mulry who will enjoy the career highlights. As it is the story of Ron's life, it includes details of his relationships and early days, yet it is the road crew stories that prevail.



Bear delivers fan to Ron
Photographer - Bob King

Ron avoids tipping any buckets, which is a shame since he was treated so poorly. He truly gave his life to his musical master. Ronald Clayton has penned a valuable account of an era that can never be repeated.

Email Ron to buy the book: kim_ron@optusnet.com.au



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THE MILL REPORT



MP3S SCOURGE OF THE AUDIO WORLD

By rights, no-one should even remember the MP3 format by now, any more than people can remember betamax or hi-8 tapes in the video industry. Somewhere along the line the audio industry was sold a miserable lie that has all but poisoned our capacity to advance the hi-res digital cause.

It's time we woke up from this nightmare and told the big companies, whose collective boot has been on the throat of high fidelity for decades, to step aside and let consumers hear music the way artists intended them to.

Down here at The Mill this month I've been tangled up yet again in a process that by rights should no longer even exist in this rapidly expanding 21st Century – the destruction of all our hard-won audio quality for the sake of a '90s internet model and the tiny handful of giant companies that rack up billions in profits because of it.

BY ANDY STEWART

Yep, I'm talking about the dirty rat that no-one seems to be able to flush down the pipes – the MP3.

Only last night I was debating it again at a fundraiser for a local FM radio station. This station, like so many others around the country, plays MP3s over the airwaves for several reasons: because the files are small enough to manage in their tens of thousands, the storage and backup is therefore cheaper, and the software can buffer the audio more easily.

"But what about the sound quality?" I asked. "Isn't the sound of the music you play important to the station and its listeners?"

"Nup, not really," came the response. "You can't really hear the difference in a car anyway, particularly after the transmitters have had their way with the audio."

Here once again was sound quality taking a back seat to convenience and process. The grand assumption that people can't hear the difference between a hi-res audio file and its squashed tin-can facsimile was once again on display without any apparent thought given to testing or scrutinising the assertion.

So why, if this is true, do we the audio professionals bother to develop more advanced recording software and hardware in perpetuity? Why, if this is true, would anyone therefore waste their time and money on great mics, better converters, decent studio setups and sophisticated recording, mixing and mastering skills? Why, if this were true, would anyone bother producing hi-res audio products at all?

Because the differences are massive, that's why, and preserving audio quality right through to the end product should not be an unreasonable expectation in 2015.

Andy Stewart owns and operates The Mill studio in south Gippsland, Victoria; a world-class production, mixing and mastering facility. He's happy to respond to any pleas for technical help... contact him at: andy@themillstudio.com.au or visit www.themillstudio.com.au

Seriously, what the hell has happened to us all? Have we finally surrendered to the malevolent marketing policies of companies like Apple et al, to the extent that we now concur with them that an MP3 is the best listening format?

It's the greatest scam ever foisted on an industry and I'm sick and tired of being the one left sounding unhinged simply because I defend hi-res audio formats.

It's the peddlers of this lowest form of digital audio who should be outed as being unhinged. These companies are complicit in the wholesale destruction of audio quality worldwide for no other reason than it's easier for them to sell and disseminate their bogus products – or at least that was the argument *more than a decade ago*.

It's like getting new cars and crushing them in a compactor *before* they're sold, and somehow getting away with it. Pre-crushed cars would certainly be easier to ship, no question about it, but who would want to drive one?

But what's more obnoxious are the lies that companies like Apple spin about their MP3 files being 'hi-res'. To describe any MP3 as 'hi-res' is like painting wings on a ten-pin and calling it a penguin.

BLIND LEMMINGS

What has re-opened this contentious wound back here at The Mill this week has been the release of a fantastic new record by a Melbourne artist called Tim Guy. His new album, *Chords*, has finally hit the airwaves and is sounding great.

But confusion has taken hold with respect to the production and dissemination of MP3 versions of the songs via the usual digital websites. Tim is 'hearing things' in the down-sampling that he's not too happy about, though the issues seem subtle to the ears of others.

But that's not the point.

This is an album that has had the proverbial kitchen sink thrown at it. It has taken advantage of the very best of analogue tape recording technology, analogue console and half-inch valve tape mixing, high-end ProTools production and quality mastering. It sounds fantastic... but now the trashing of all this hard work has begun in earnest.

Why? Why must his music be converted into such a throw-back low-res format before most people will hear it? Someone has to ask the question again, or does no-one even bother any more?

It's like a sick joke to me that in 2015, the MP3 – that pathetic loser of a format that failed to gain traction back in the 1990s – should be such an unholy mainstay decades later. There is no justifying it on any level, yet the format and malaise surrounding its ubiquity persist.

It's a tragedy that the wider audio industry continues to take this issue lying down. While it has been great to

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see a small smattering of musicians and producers trying to buck this insidious slide lately, taking a stand against the degradation of their music, the battle requires a much more mainstream effort.

MP3 – AUDIO'S 4K?

I continue to marvel at the advancement of visual technology and that industry's consumer-end products: 4k and Blu-Ray to name but two. The world of the visual continues to go from strength to strength and the latest technological advancements at the consumer end are simply stunning.

What's more incredible about this relentless progression in the visual realm is how consumers of these products – *the very same people who have apparently become cloth-eared with respect to audio* – not only see the differences between the formats and resolutions, they pay good money to own it.

Meanwhile the audio industry continues to fall backwards, paralysed in the merciless grip of one or two enormous companies that couldn't care less about audio quality. Education of listeners is a dead concept online and in stores, and the guilt associated with this spread of aural deafness rests as much with the MP3 peddlers as anybody. What's left of the 'hi-fi' component of stores like JB Hi-Fi is pitiful and embarrassing.

TIME TO FIGHT BACK

One day – hopefully soon – this MP3 saga will all seem like a distant memory. When we do finally come to our senses and the fog clears, we'll hopefully take a leaf out of the world of television and push the boundaries of hi-res audio formats for the first time since the CD – more than 30 years ago.

Perhaps by then big business will also realise that MP3 peddlers have punched such a massive hole in the world of hi-fi you could drive a very lucrative truck through it. All the millions of hi-res audio files sitting on the shelves of artists, producers and record companies are just *begging* to be released and profited from. All it will take is someone to wake up to the fact that the MP3 peddlers have been crushing songs for profit and getting away with it for far too long.

One day soon people will be educated to hear the differences between audio resolutions once again, and we can stop dumbing down our files once and for all.

Won't that be novel?

TOOLBOX REVIEW

AUDIO-TECHNICA ATH-R70X OPEN BACK HEADPHONES

I've probably reviewed Audio-Technica headphones once too often in recent times, and I promise this will be the last instalment for a while.

But I haven't been able to resist having a quick chat about the Japanese company's new ATH-R70x open-backed reference model. It's only just hit the streets, and surprisingly, it's the first open-back model ever made by the company. They've made everything else by the thousands – closed-back studio headphones, DJ models, ear buds, camouflage fashion statements... you name it – but this is the company's first foray into the world of what can genuinely be classed professional reference.

The reason I've felt compelled to review these headphones is because, simply stated, they sound superb, and anyone thinking of buying a set of reference headphones for mixing (not recording... near microphones at least) should check them out before they buy anything.

The detail and balance of these headphones is nothing short of astonishing. The 45mm drivers provide full tone right down into the deep sub-harmonics, they're clear as cut glass yet smooth as silk into the bargain. I have rarely heard such balance and pinpoint accuracy from anything that replays sound – speaker or headphone – and rarely have I felt so comfortable wearing a pair of headphones, both in terms of their physical fit and tonal balance.

The 'wing support' system, in particular, which keeps the metal headband off your head is extremely comfortable and well designed, though the system's workload is relatively easy because the transducers themselves are so incredibly light.

I have lots of different headphones here at The Mill that I use during mixing sessions, but I suspect they're all going to spend long months in the drawer now that the R70xs have arrived.

The only way the others might see the light of day again soon is if the Audio-Technica's suffer some unforeseen mishap.

One thing about the ATH-R70xs is that because they're incredibly comfortable to wear and super lightweight (210 grams!), they do seem a little on the fragile side to me, particularly if they were subjected to the rough and tumble of a commercial studio environment.

Though the headband is constructed from metal and the open grilles on the back of the speakers are an aluminium honeycomb design, I suspect they'd be done no favours by a stray boot while cast on the studio floor.

But provided they're handled somewhat delicately, they will serve engineers well. They're an amazingly well designed headphone for critical listening: fast, super low in distortion, and impressively wide in their frequency response (5Hz – 40kHz).

The R70xs are brilliant at presenting the stereo image with genuine depth and detail – a well-worn cliché it must be said, but true in this instance. And at \$499 they're a total steal I reckon.

If you're looking to mix in headphones in the months ahead and your budget doesn't extend into the four figures, these are a compelling option to consider. In fact, they will be hard to top even if your budget is limitless.



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Music Pirates Set Sail While The White Guys Got Fat

The CD revolutionized profits at the big labels in the 1980's. Suddenly the A&R guys were less important, signing and recording new acts was eclipsed by the simpler profits that sloughed into the bank from re-releasing existing material.

As CD tracks required a lot of storage for each minute played, the white guys who ran the big music labels believed no one could pirate their music. After all, it wasn't like cassette duplication, was it? No one could realistically 'copy' a CD when do-it-yourself burners were not yet invented. And file sharing huge files? The technology didn't exist!

How dumb were these white guys? Stephen Witt explains this and much else in his excellent debut novel, 'How Music Got Free'. He starts with Doug Morris, the North American head of Warner Music Group who was earning US\$10 million in 1995 along with all the other good stuff.

Guys like Morris had inherited blazing arrogance from their precursor's at the record labels. Those guys had decades earlier appropriated the Hollywood Studio model which signed the actor to the one studio for five years or five movies. The 'Star System' drew actors in and if they resonated, they did multiple movies for one studio – at the studio's option. An actor needed to sell themselves to get into a film, along with all that could entail, and relied on the benevolence



Stephen Witt (2015)

How Music Got Free

What happens when an entire generation commits the same crime?

of the studio boss. Favors were done, deals were made. Fall out of favor, and you were 'remaindered' on the sidelines, unable to work. The movie agents got rid of the multi movie deal in the 1960's but the music labels hung on tight.

At the big record labels they locked in the act. They still try to do it today by offering a 5 year deal. You sign and they release – or not. Plenty of artists sit in purgatory when the label simply 'does nothing'. They have a contract, they are 'signed'. Turns out they are signed to nothing.

As Robert Rosen wrote on Cracked, "The labels do a great job of making you feel like the centre of the universe when you're recording. Every studio I've worked in had runners. Usually we'd go till 3 a.m. The runners were there to keep us from needing to ever leave. We'd say, 'We need Heineken, Seagram's Seven, ice cubes, a Venti iced coffee with whole milk only, a quarter ounce of weed, Backwoods cigars, and we're also going to need sushi.' A half hour later, the runner would come back with a bag full of all that stuff, courtesy of Universal. That means Universal has a designated weed guy."

BY JULIUS GRAFTON

Of course the artist is charged for all this, later on. Usually with margin added on. Label accounting became one of the great opaque art forms of our time. Many courts have tried to understand what is known as RIAA accounting, and many a musician has come to rue the day they 'just signed' a deal innocently.

HOW PIRATING TOOK OFF

The White Guys ignored the advent of MP3 because without portable players, the punters could not readily play a digital file without a desk bound beige computer and messy codecs.

The conversion from vinyl to CD was raging away through the 1990's. Every vinyl release ever was recut on CD. Punters like you and I paid around A\$20 in then money (\$45 now) per album. The labels were on a stockholder funded cocaine orgy.

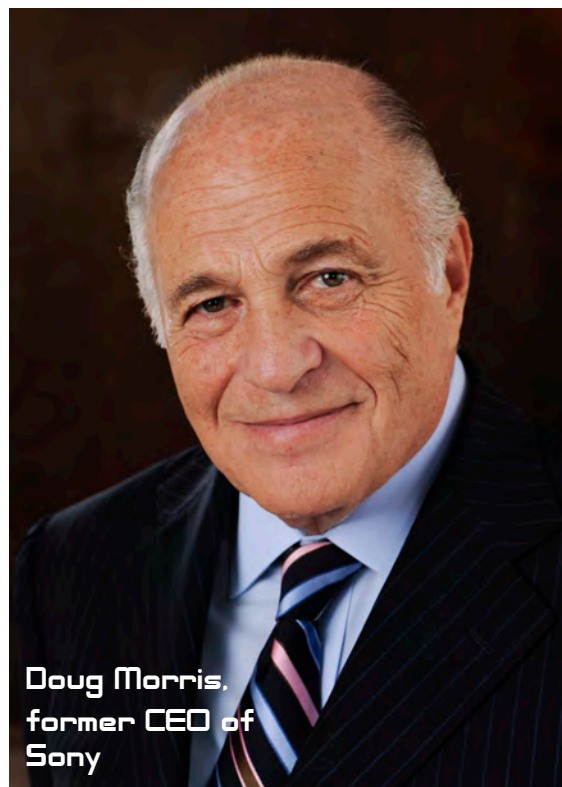
Back then touring supported the CD sales, production costs were sky high. The book takes us to the Polygram CD plant at Kings Mountain in North Carolina.

But MP3 had now technically obsoleted the CD, except hardly anyone knew. In 1995 the German MP3 development team had a stand at the Paris AES show, with a floppy disk for creating the files; a home computer for playback, and a primitive handheld player for portable listening. The interest wasn't there, the music industry were more interested in Philips mp2.

In 1996 the first Philips consumer CD burner hit the market, priced at US\$649. The guys in the plant at Kings Mountain suddenly had a second reason to steal CD's. Until now they took them just to be first, for bragging rights, playing new releases for their buddies before the release date. Now they had a way to copy and sell them.

PIT BULLS. QUAD BIKES AND STOLEN MUSIC

Witt's book takes us into the lives of the original pirates, American back-lot boys who drink Millers and watch gridiron at the saloon bar. They were downloading stolen



Doug Morris,
former CEO of
Sony

software on Internet Relay Chat (IRC), a constellation of private servers. One day they stumbled over an MP3 music track, and quickly realized a 700 mb CD could be compressed by a factor of 12.

By 1997 there was a growing channel of pirated music, and the CD workers simply loaded the stolen tracks on the IRC group site, and had them shared out for free.

By then the big record labels had consolidated, and the plant was the largest in the US, run by Universal. Their security was ultra tight – workers would pass their bags through an X-ray machine; one in five were searched. One guy on the packaging line watched the process. Since he was in packaging, he was searched more often.



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The guards would scan him and his steel capped boots would set off the alarm. Asking him if he had steel caps, the guard then waved him through. They didn't ask him to take his boots off! But a CD would not fit inside a boot. He kept watching.

Gradually he came to realize that almost every guy in the plant had large fashion accessory belt buckles and these always set off the scanners. Plus the guards never asked them to take them off. So he started stuffing the stolen CD down the front of his pants.

The plant could produce one million CD's per day.

Witt tracks the career of Doug Morris, from label hustler to head of Sony Music. He gathered over US\$200 million along the way, and found himself at a loss to understand how disrupted the music industry had become.

The studio had become Pro Tools, the pressing plant was now an mp3 encoder, and the distribution

network was a torrent tracker. The entire industry could be run off a laptop.

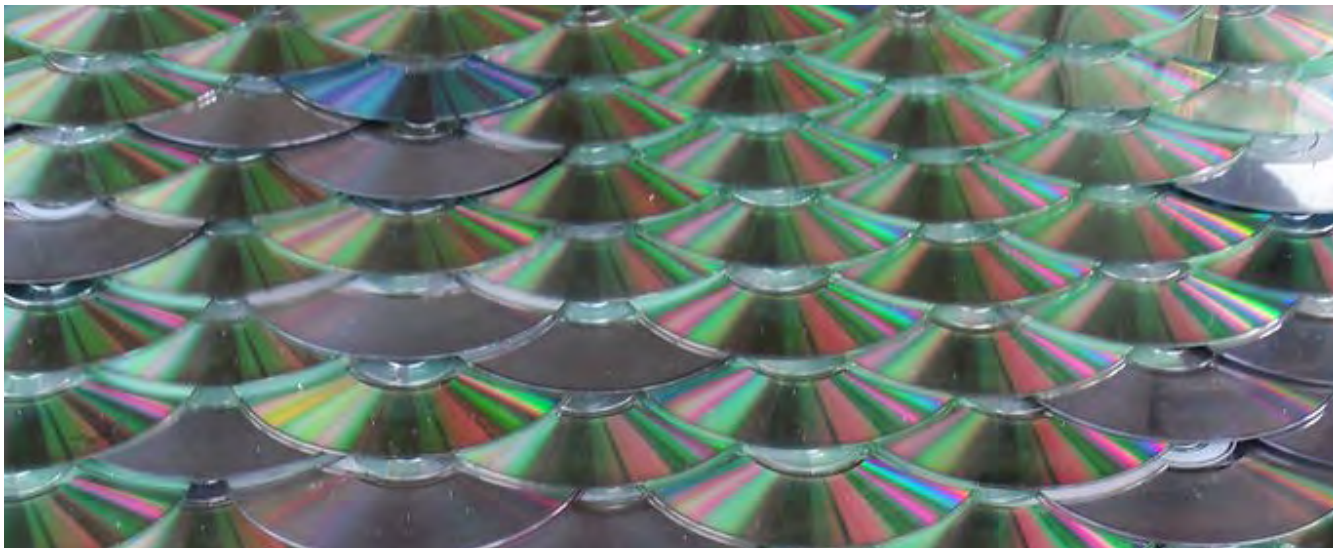
Morris got savvy, and today Sony charge YouTube a portion of the advertising revenue they get every time a Sony artist's video is run. A thirty second pre roll advert in front of Justin Beiber's "Baby" would earn 30 million for a billion plays. Morris was getting \$30 per thousand plays.

The book is thorough and travels a lot of miles. We learn Morris was squired by Steve Jobs but declined as he realized Jobs was dying.

Eventually Morris retired wealthy, as a White Guy who got Fat while his industry burned.

Now recording artists need to tour and sell merchandise to survive.

How Music Got Free
Stephen Witt
The Bodley Head, London.



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BY ANDY STEWART

RANTING, RAVING & MONEY WORTH SAVING

When it comes to audio production, one thing is certain; there are no rules.

And for that we can thank people like Geoff Emerick of Beatles fame (amongst others). He used to break rules on a daily basis: put mics close to drum kits, feed line-level signals back into mic preamps, man-handle spools while the analogue tape machine was running and (heaven help us all) distort tape! Back then these processes almost cost him his job at Abbey Road. Now that studio trades off his 'anarchic tendencies' to the tune of millions!



characteristic? Have they never recorded a blindingly shrill vocalist before that needed serious taming, a dull bass that was crying out for detail, or a harsh electric guitar that needed an extended bottom end and a more merciful midrange response? Have they never recorded in a harsh room or placed mics in front of imperfect instruments?

What is 'flatness' anyway, and what does a 'flat' mic sound like? Frankly, I don't know a single engineer worth his or her salt who's preoccupied with 'flatness' during a recording session. In fact, generally the exact opposite holds true.

Most engineers choose mics that bring out the best in a sound, focus in on one aspect of its tone, or modify a sound's frequency response to suit the wider musical or environmental context. More importantly, most engineers know that if you put 10 so-called 'flat' mics in front of a common sound source they'd all capture something different anyway.

Variety is what engineers, musicians and producers want, not some theoretical ideal. But of course microphone manufacturers already know this. That's why they often have dozens of microphones in their range, not just one! So please, let's dispense with promoting the 'flat' mic theory as if we're all thick, and ditch the defensive outbursts when someone says a microphone sounds great on X but not Y.

2: MY PRODUCT IS GOOD, THEIRS IS BAD

I'd like a dollar for every time someone in the industry has 'confided' in me that their rival's latest speaker design sounds terrible but theirs is brilliant, or that the latest compressor designed by Jonny X is crap because his company now manufactures in China.

What, am I a fool? Am I really expected to agree with these types of assertions when they're almost always based on hearsay and rumour mongering? I've been in this game far too long to accept this drivel, and know from experience that concepts like 'good' and 'bad' are best left to conversations about ethics, not audio equipment.

Of course, there are times when something can be described as being 'faulty', 'unreliable' or 'inappropriate' – like when an A/D converter catches fire in the middle of a take. At that point I'd be the first person to throw mud.

But to assert that something always sounds 'bad' no matter what the context or circumstance is to misunderstand what

So why do so many 'industry types' peddle so many rules even still? Every time I go to a trade show you'd think we were back in the 1960s... rules: the last bastion of the sales pitch.

Instruments all sound different, voices all sound different, people's sonic tastes are all different, music evolves and devolves with fashion trends, as does technology, and nothing ever stays the same for long.

With that in mind, here are five things that really get my goat when I find myself talking to people 'in the industry' who sell their wares to end-users.

1: THE FLAT MIC THEORY

Why oh why do so many microphone manufacturers feel obliged to promote their latest product as always being better sounding than anything ever made, and (typically falsely) that their new mic has a 'flat' response?

Frankly, I'm utterly sick of hearing about Microphone X being 'flat' and 'true'. It's generally misleading and irrelevant anyway for one simple reason: sound sources are as wide and varied as stars in the sky. Every sound has its own sonic footprint, its own musical and/or environmental context and no two people ever agree on how any of these sounds should be captured.

In other words, no one mic could ever be expected to suit every purpose, tone or context because every recording is different – some radically so.

So why on earth do manufacturers think customers care about 'flatness' over and above every other

audio production is often about. Sometimes the very worst sounding products are the very best solution in a particular context. Some of the cheapest instruments, the most distorted microphones, the noisiest and dullest compressors are the best sounding ingredient for a specific purpose.

So please... don't tell me that something sounds crap when you haven't even heard it, let alone used it. There's nothing worse than someone who bitches and moans about a product they don't sell or use. It always makes me think just one thing: what would they say if they sold it themselves?

3: WARMTH... AS IN TEMPERATURE?

For whatever reason – boredom perhaps, or just plain laziness – whenever I'm at a trade show it seems there's one adjective hoisted up the flagpole with monotonous regularity by manufacturers and salespeople alike – 'warmth'.

If, while talking to someone about their new audio device, this dreaded word escapes their mouth during the banter, I shrivel like a snail doused in salt.

Seriously, are we still happy to trot this adjective out every time we want to garner respect for a product? Can someone please rescue me with a skyhook next time so I don't have to endure another conversation about 'warmth'?

I sometimes dream of having a magic ring, a-la Bilbo Baggins, that I can slip on the moment someone uses this word in an audio conversation on a tradeshow floor.

"Yeah Andy, you should hear this new valve compressor. It's the great cure-all for digital recording... it's just amazing how much warmth it..."

Shhrrrowpt. Gone!

4: MUSIC HAS GONE TO THE DOGS

This one really amazes me when I hear it voiced.

Somewhat incredibly, there are many in the industry who genuinely believe that there's no good music being created in the here and now.

This sort of assertion really blows my mind. When I think

of all the incredible stuff being made every year by some truly remarkable performers, the very notion that there's "nothing worth listening to" out there really astounds me.

I really can't understand what drives people – who profess to love music – to make such ignorant and flagrantly stupid comments really, but sure as night follows day, the next time I'm at a tradeshow someone will trot it out.

It's like saying there are no good films made any more, or that cars are all crap now since computers got involved in their manufacture. It's just plain nonsense spouted from the mouths of those who have long since – for whatever reason – stopped discovering new music.

5: IT SOUNDS LIKE THE ORIGINAL

There have been some truly amazing pieces of equipment manufactured over the years, some of them well deserving of their near-mythical reputations.

And while I have heard new products occasionally sound remarkably like an 'original' device they claim to replicate, most gear made these days that's marketed as having a 'classic' pedigree doesn't come within a bull's roar of the original.

I know this isn't really news to anyone, but I really hate this sort of behaviour. To these manufacturers I would simply say this: if you can't design your own products but instead feel comfortable stealing the designs and reputations of others, passing them off as your own work, don't expect any respect from your peers.

Often there's very little behind these companies other than familiar looking knobs and the occasional distant relation.

But in the end it's the relevance of these assertions that engineers, both young and old, must continuously question. A new product copying the design of an old one isn't new or remarkable or even relevant these days.

In the end a product that harks back to a classic design of yore might have some similarities, but in the end the only judge is you and your ear.

But we all know that, don't we.

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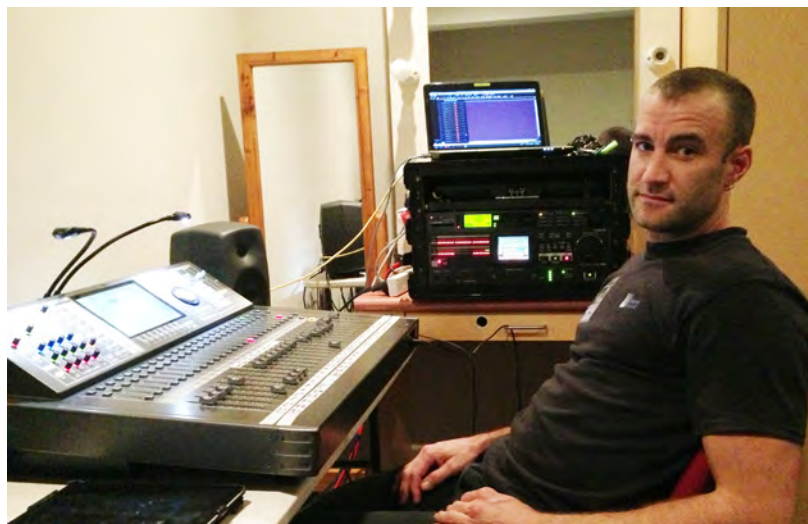
As some of you may know, I freelance as an audio guy in a number of different fields. Not surprisingly I've bought a bit of equipment over the years to further this pursuit. Looking back at the choices I've made, it's funny the things in which I choose to invest. Some of them were poor choices, but thankfully most were good ones. I thought since it's been about 20 years since I bought my first piece of real audio gear, now might be an interesting time to reflect on some of the gear choices I've made, and what I've learnt from those choices.

My FAVOURITE bits of kit

BY JIMMY DEN-ODEN

The first piece of pro audio gear I ever purchased was a Behringer MX1602 mixing console. Behringer was in its infancy back then, and from memory this little console with four mic inputs and four stereos cost around the \$500 mark. These days you get more console for your money, still, it's been a useful little tool over the years, and aside from needing to replace one cap in the power supply it's been very reliable. I still use it for monitoring multi-track records when we shoot "The Hump" here at CX HQ.

I bought an Alesis HD24 recorder second hand out of the US - I paid a bit over a grand at the time, and the shipping cost me half that much again. It was totally worth it though, because the HD24 is a great box. I liked it so much that I later bought a second unit and kitted up to do 48 channel multitrack records. The 48 channel system was relatively short lived, but I did get to record Gary





Numan with it, so that was cool. The HD24 is rock solid and it sounds good. The biggest problem is that occasionally when you hit it with too much vibration (ie; really high SPL) it drops out of record – that and extracting the files from the drive caddies is a bit painful. I subsequently replaced the Alesis kit with a Roland V-Mixer, digital snake and recorder.

I was an early adopter of the Roland system – I think I had one of the first M-480 mixers and R-1000 recorders in the country. The retained value of the system now is basically zero, but that doesn't matter since I've had it for several years and the entire kit paid for itself in the first six months I owned it. It's done some pretty respectable gigs too, including mixing a few orchestras and recording Alice Cooper and Icehouse. Regardless of its low retained worth, I'm going to chalk this one up as a good investment. Also worth noting is at the time this gear was released, literally nothing else on the market offered the same value.



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NTi Audio make the XL2, and being a guy who likes to measure stuff I decided it was a piece of gear I needed. It's not something I pull off the shelf every day, but it is the 'go to' box for when I want to do some accurate SPL measurements, or to find a delay or something. When SPL on-site is important, I take it to gigs I'm mixing to help with compliance.

Many years back I bought a set of Sennheiser HD280 headphones because at the time I couldn't afford HD-25s, and I've gotta say, the 280s have been good. I finally killed them completely last year, but with the level of abuse (both physical and electronic) they've sustained over the years I'm really quite surprised they lasted this long. Definitely a good buy.

The TC Electronic Fireworx was something I bought on a whim – never the best motivation. For those unfamiliar, it's an amazingly good effect processor which allows you to cascade different processing blocks and do all sorts of cool stuff. The hassle is that with so many options, it takes about a week to make it do what you want it to. Fine if you've got the luxury of plenty of time, but it's not a good choice for live use. Also, it was eye-wateringly expensive. It's been relegated to DA duties in my office now, driving my second set of monitors. It's a waste of a cool processor, but hey I needed a converter and I just can't entertain selling it.

A more useful choice was the PCM60 – a fantastic reverb despite only having two presets (room or plate), which you select with mechanically interlocking buttons. There are four choices for size and time, and you can set every parameter on the entire box in about 8 seconds. An excellent reverb for live use, it lived in the outboard rack I used when I was doing a lot of recording via an analogue console. Similarly the M-One XL and D-Two made me good returns for the duration I owned them.

My first real set of monitors were Dynaudio BM-5As, and as nice as they are they were a bad choice. I should have gone for the BM-6As straight off the bat, since this is what I replaced them with a year later. The 5s were nice, but the 6s are far nicer and don't really cost that much more.

I saw a second hand PreSonus Faderport one day on ebay, listed as working except for the motorised fader. Fancying myself as a person who can fix things, I bought it for \$15 plus shipping. The thing arrived along with a plugpack which output exactly zero Volts – I replaced this with a 9V plugpack as per spec and the thing came good. I later replaced it with a Mackie MCU, and listed the Faderport on ebay – it sold for six times what I'd paid.

Mics. I've bought a lot of mics for a guy who doesn't use them that often. Including DI boxes, I've got enough to populate every input of a 48 channel console. I have U4 and U5 MD421s, a box of DPA 4099s, some Beyer M69TGs, an old M201, assorted common and weird condensers,

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and a swag of vocal mics. I was pretty in love with the e945 for a while, and bought several of them. Turns out the e935 has a much friendlier pattern for most singers, so I added three of those to the kit. I finally bought another D4 to go with the one I had – not because I needed it, but I like to have things in pairs. How much do I make off mic hire? In strict terms, bugger all. I take mics to gigs because it makes my day easier and more enjoyable. Are they a good investment? Financially no, but they help make me look good, which in turn helps land the next gig. I consider them a good investment in my reputation.

A dozen or so Pelican cases in various sizes occupy my store room, along with a few racks and one or two custom cases. I reckon good cases are one of the best investments you can make not only to protect your gear, but also your reputation. I still occasionally see people turn up to shows with a mish-mash of assorted cardboard boxes, plastic tubs and even milk crates, and it just looks cheap. It also doesn't do the equipment any favours by way of protection!

Quality hardware is another good investment. I bought a couple of Manfrotto magic arms years ago to hold lipstick cameras at a barista competition I was supplying video for, but they've found plenty of other uses since then. Typically they hold audience mics, but I've recently figured out that using one to hold my kick drum mic works really well – I clamp it to the leg so if the drum moves the mic moves with it, thus staying in the right spot.

A few years back I bought a few rolls of Van Damme cable, and big box of Neutrik connectors, and I had

myself the festival of making cable. It was a good decision – every cable I own looks the same and every cable works perfectly. It's nice being able to plug a cable in and categorically know it's going to work correctly.

In 2007 I bought a then entry level 15" Macbook Pro, and I'm still using it now in 2015. Eight year working life is pretty well unheard of for computers in general (remember they depreciate over three years!), and while I've had to replace the drive with an SSD, add some RAM and put a new battery in over those years I can chalk that up to maintenance. I definitely got my value out of that machine, several times over.

Last up, quality tools. I have a Panasonic drill, the battery for which costs more than two complete drills from any number of other makes. But it works every time I reach for it, and it has a stupid amount of torque – more than enough to break whatever bit is installed in the keyless chuck. The previous drill I owned died in a plume of smoke, but not before the batteries had both failed. I spent \$400 on my soldering iron, which is a Goot, with digital display and a lockable menu. It hits operating temp nine seconds after you turn it on, and holds it with absolute precision. The time I don't spend waiting for a crappy iron to warm up or recover temperature has more than offset the initial expense. Buy a good soldering iron, because it's totally worth it.

So what's the lesson here? Buy quality. The cheap junk things are the purchases I invariably regret. It's generally cheaper to buy a quality thing once than to keep replacing a rubbish one. Invest wisely!

:update

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MA Lighting dot2

Standby for conversion

BY JIMMY DEN-UDEN

dot2 is a new lighting control platform from MA Lighting. It is designed to offer many of the same functions as you'll find on a full MA 2 console, but with a user interface which is easier for users who've not previously used the platform to navigate. How MA has achieved this is quite interesting.

Those who have used a full size MA 2 console will know they afford a huge level of user interface customisation. You can generate a user profile and load this independent of a show file, so the console will always work exactly how you've told it to. This is excellent for power users, as it allows the console to be setup exactly as they require. Yet such a level of configurability can be intimidating to new initiates to the platform, since you effectively need to build a user interface before you can operate the show.

dot2 removes the need to do this by pre-determining the functionality to appear on each of the internal screens - the external screen can still be customized to an extent. While the core mode of operation is more rigidly defined than on MA 2,

dot2 is a good stepping stone for new users to acclimate to the MA syntax. Another important point about dot2 is that it uses IPv6 connectivity to link to wings, nodes on PC systems and the dot2 3D visualiser, so getting the various system components talking with each other is simplified.

Because dot2 is a completely new hardware and software platform, you wouldn't expect it to be compatible with other systems. The good news here is that MA intends to allow dot2 shows to be imported into MA 2 systems. As with MA 2 systems dot2 supports full tracking backup, and the backup system can be as simple as a PC and a dot2 node.

Hardware choices start at the base level dot2 core console, which includes six playback faders with adjacent executor keys, 12 executor buttons, and a dual 120mm fader theatre style playback (one fader controls level, the other is a crossfader). The programmer layout will be familiar to MA 2 users because it's basically the same. A master fader and intensity wheel sit to the right end of the console, and four rotary encoders are located beneath the main one of two touch screens.



The dot2 is a complete self-contained console, and yet it looks uncomplicated and inviting to use. The core console supports up to an additional two fader and two button wings – as will a dot2 onPC system with a dot2 Node. The difference is that while the onPC system supports 1024 channels via the node, the console supports up to 4096 via a combination of its four internal DMX outputs, plus ArtNet or additional DMX ports on a dot2 Node.

Two slightly expanded consoles are also available – the XL-F and XL-B which essentially have a fader or button wing built-in respectively. The external wing capacity is reduced by whatever the internal adds, so on the XL-F for instance you can add one fader wing and two button wings. The point is that there's plenty of scope to expand the console well beyond the small to mid-sized shows and venues for which it's designed.

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Extra on-board connections include analogue GPI interface, audio input, and MIDI / SMPTE timecode. There's also a DMX input which allows capture from another console. It's a lot of functionality in a really compact and attractive package.

From the moment you switch the dot2 on, you get the feeling it's there to make your day easier. Loading a brand new show, the internal screen explains the first step is to patch in some fixtures, and it gives instructions on how to achieve this. There's no internal fixture editor, but a standalone editor is available for PC or Mac, and importing fixtures from a USB drive is very easy.

Once the fixtures are patched, you can choose the fixtures you want to use either by typing the fixture numbers in, or just choosing them from the fixture page on the touch screen. Storing groups is easy, as is storing presets and scenes. A nice feature is that presets such as colour will automatically assume a logical name, so you don't need to spend hours labeling stuff. An external USB keyboard is the easy way to type labels for things like cues, but you can use the Label button on the surface then touch the parameter you want to name, and this gives you an on-screen keyboard which is compact but still usable.

Figuring out the syntax for operations such as moving a cue list from one fader to another requires little effort – just think about how it should work, and chances are that's how it will work. The dot2 is completely intuitive, and after a very short time playing with it I felt completely at ease with its operation. I'd willingly take it out to a gig, and an important gig at that. The in-built help function is useful in case you get confused, and updates to the help file happened automatically when you updated the console firmware. But it gets better still.

The dot2 3D visualiser (like the dot2 onPC software) is a free download from the dot2 site, and unlike every other visualiser I've ever tried to use, it's easy to setup and use. It's running on my laptop right now. Once you've setup your patch in the console, just link up the network cables, set the laptop network to auto everything, and then go into the Setup menu on the dot2 and add the laptop to the current session. Once you do this, the layout in dot2 3D auto populates with the patched fixtures. Then you just drag and drop to virtually arrange the fixtures as they would be in the real world. Facilities to auto arrange and space units are included, so it's a quick process. The only thing to watch is that the visualiser and console are running the same software version – I did an update on our test console which all worked as expected.

The best thing about the visualiser is that it's interactive with the console. Click on a fixture in the visualiser, and this selects it on the console. The visualiser allows the addition of physical objects like people, and you can even use it to point fixtures at specific objects. I don't know how much of this is new for MA – it's probably safe to say you can do most if not all this on MA 2. What is new is that it's easy enough that I can understand it and make it work. The dot2 platform turns the concept of virtually programming a show into an actual viable reality for me, and I'm a sound guy. I think that's totally awesome.

I reckon to pull a show together you need to be able to do several things – patch, select, and modify fixture parameters, then store some presets, cues and lists. Getting all this happening on the dot2 is easy, and while it's enough to get started, most users will typically want to use effects as well. Again, this is a case of choosing the fixture(s), then on the main screen choosing the type of effect parameter you want (position, colour, etc). Then press the little sinewave symbol on the screen to access the effects screen. The effects engine is easy to engage, and just as importantly to disengage. Effects can be stored as presets for the parameters to which they correspond – so you can store a colour chase the same way you store a colour.

Some commands like "Stomp" have keyboard equivalents, but if you don't already know these you can still access the command quite readily via the touch screen. Features like a selection of pre-programmed phase values allow you to get good looking effects running with minimal effort, but you can still punch in values manually if that's your preference. The view button has a picture of an eye on it, and is used to see detailed info about cue lists and such. Editing the functions of executor keys is done on-screen, and again the process is obvious.

Seriously I can't get over how easy it is to get around the dot2. I've been a bit intimidated by the MA platform in the past, and the dot2 has given me a completely new perspective on it. MA has done a brilliant job with the dot2 - I like this console so much not just because of what I can do with it, but also for how comfortable the whole process feels.



BRAND: MA LIGHTING

MODEL: DOT2

RRP: DOT2 CORE CONSOLE -

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BOSE F1 System

Flexible array loudspeaker system

BY JIMMY DEN-OUDEM



Bose is a company that has kind of always done things its own way. The F1 system is no exception to this - I literally can't think of anything on the market today which is remotely similar. Our test system comprised the F1 Model 812 flexible array loudspeaker with the optional F1 subwoofer. A removable frame is integrated into the rear of the subwoofer, and once this is unlatched and slotted into the top of the subwoofer, it forms a platform onto which the Model 812 can then be placed. The frame includes cable management slots, and as you'd well expect from Bose the entire system is neat and attractive in its appearance.

I've chosen my words carefully in this story, since my default practice of referring to the 812 as a "top box" would be a bit inaccurate. The 812 comprises a single 12" LF driver mounted behind eight 2.25" mid-high drivers, mounted on an adjustable baffle. Crossover frequency is 600Hz, nominal horizontal coverage is 100 degrees, and frequency response is listed as 52Hz – 15.5kHz (+/- 3dB). So you see, the 812 is closer to a full-range speaker than a mid-high. The mid-high drivers are individually mounted on waveguides, and this is where things get really interesting.

The centre two drivers are fixed in position, but the upper and lower sets of three waveguides and drivers can be independently tilted backward, allowing the vertical coverage of the Model 812 to be adjusted. Each of the upper and lower sections snap into place in the forward or backward position courtesy of magnets concealed within the enclosure. As each section snaps into place, subtle changes are made to the internal processing of the array to adjust the nominal vertical coverage. The Model 812 is internally bi-amplified, so presumably the processing changes relate to level.

Four modes are available – straight line, J curve, reverse J curve, or C curve. This allows the Model 812 to be used in a variety of different situations – the F1 website illustrates this very well with diagrams.

As physics has taught us, the lower the frequency you wish to steer, the longer the array you need to do this. For an array which is just a little over 66cm high, the Model 812 does quite a good job of directing sound in response to changes to the baffle configuration. It sends the sound where you point it, which (assuming you point it in the right direction) is a big win in reverberant spaces.

The back panel of the Model 812 includes IEC power connection and rocker switch, as well as dual audio inputs. The first input uses a combo XLR/TRS connector and it can be switched between mic and line sensitivity, while the second input offers dual RCA or a TRS jack. Independent level control and input signal LED is provided for each channel, and there's also a "full range / with sub" switch, as well as a switch to control the front panel LED function (power, limit or off). The rear panel shows a power LED as well as an amp limit LED, and try as I might I was unable to drive the amp into limit before clipping the input channel. We ran pink noise into the Model 812 in full range mode, and at 1m recorded a maximum SPL of 117dBA(slow). Granted it wasn't sounding quite

itself at this point but it went way louder than I was expecting it to. When you're not completely wringing its neck, the Model 812 sounds really good. Sonically it's the most well-balanced Bose speaker I've ever heard. Impressive as it is, some users will require more low-end extension than the single 12" offers.

The good news is that the F1 Subwoofer matches up nicely with the Model 812. It comprises a pair of 10" drivers, and physically it's just a bit larger than the 812, and at 24.9kg it's still fairly manageable for one person. The integrated stand is a really nice idea, I just can't help but wish they'd made the whole thing a bit taller to give the 812 some more elevation. The F1 subwoofer has dual XLR/TRS combo jack inputs with line outputs and common level control. Slide switches allow for polarity reversal and HPF on the line outputs.



While the F1 sub is clearly designed as part of the F1 system, it's also generic and flexible enough you could use it in conjunction with other products. It strikes me that this is almost a new level of 'interoperability' for Bose, and I think it's a very positive move indeed. I'm of the opinion that Bose has always made good subs, and the F1 sub is no exception to this. It pushes out very respectable level for a compact little unit, and I found I needed to turn it down a little from the centre detent to prevent it from dominating the system.

I was not sure what to expect from the F1 system. I thought the flexible array thing would be a bit of a gimmick, but having played with it I can see it being quite useful in real-world applications. I like how the system sounds, and the way it's refreshingly compatible with other gear. Most of all, I like the price, which is around the same as you'd pay for a 12" & horn and subwoofer system from any other reputable manufacturer. F1 is market competitive to start with, and the flexible coverage options only add to the value.



BRAND: BOSE
 MODEL: F1 SYSTEM
 PRICE: F1 MODEL 812 - \$1699 INC GST.
 F1 SUBWOOFER - \$1699 INC GST.
 PRODUCT INFO: F1.BOSE.COM.AU
 DISTRIBUTOR: BOSE.COM.AU

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High End Systems SolaSpot Pro 1500

The big giant head

BY JIMMY DEN-ouden



and I really like that the High End has paid enough attention to implement a solution. Clearly they've spent some time properly developing the product.

Aside from the LED engine, the head contains an array of optical features. CMY and 6+open position colour wheel, linear CTO, 6+open rotating and 7+open static gobo wheels, iris, animation wheel, 3 facet prism, 8 to 45 degree zoom, focus, frost, four blade framing shutters, and a lens defog system. Of course there's the obligatory High End indigo highlighter function too. All up it's an extremely solid feature set, and really more typical of what we've seen in discharge powered fixtures. There's no space wasted inside the head, and the reality is that despite perception, the SolaSpot Pro 1500 is about as compact as it can possibly be.

I put it next to another LED fixture with a more powerful engine, and at the same distance and projected beam width, the SolaSpot Pro 1500 was actually brighter. Not by much, but there was a discernable difference. Gobo projection is pretty clean, though I found it harder to achieve crisp focus on all four framing shutter blades

Initially I wasn't too sure what to make of the SolaSpot Pro 1500, because its physical appearance seems so at odds with what I've come to expect LED fixtures to be. It's physically large, and at 39.5kg it's hefty too. Why is it so big? Given its name, you might expect the light source in the SolaSpot Pro 1500 to be a 1500W LED engine, but in actual fact it's only 400W (I can't think of a fixture with more than about a 700W LED source anyway). More and more puzzled I was.

I pulled the lids off to find out exactly what was going on inside, and discovered that the physical bulk of the head of the fixture and its weight is accounted for by a very comprehensive beam feature set and optic train. The engineering seems to be quite sturdy too, with lots of metal accounting for the kilograms. While I had the lids off, I noted that under specific conditions the fixture engages additional cooling fans. It's like it somehow knows that the optic path is holding more heat, so it reacts appropriately with more cooling. Obviously this is a boon for reliability,

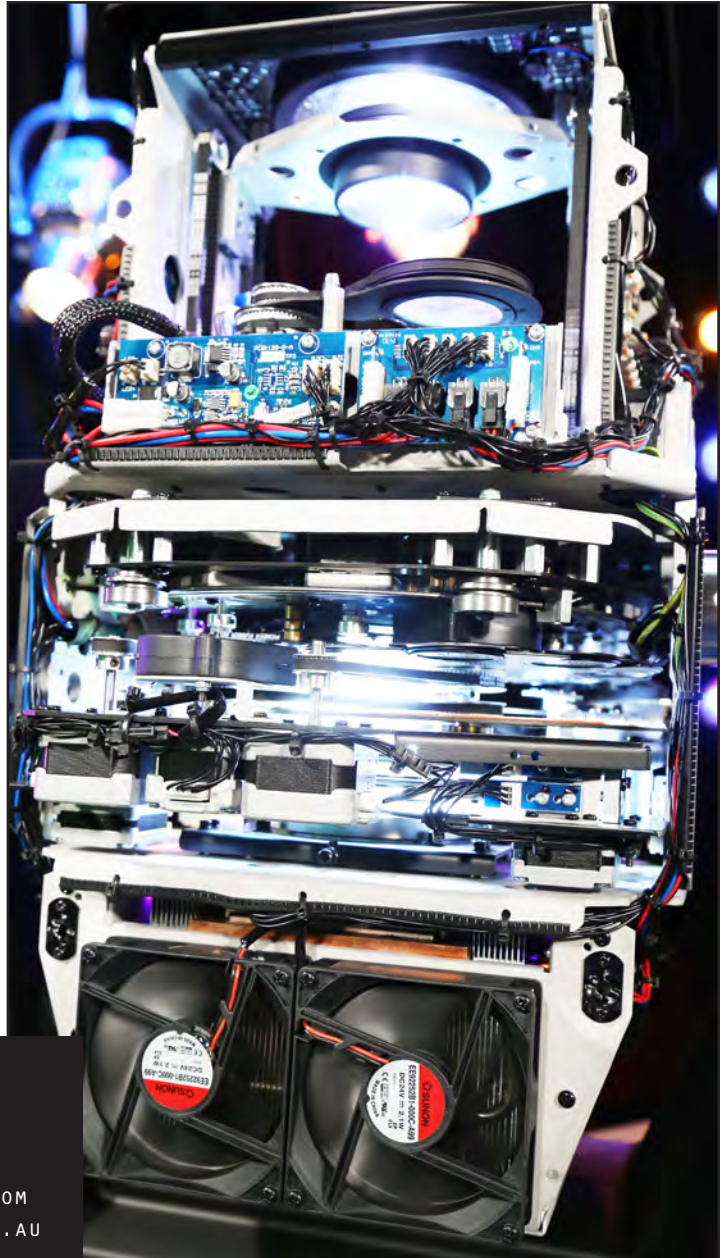




simultaneously. Possibly I just need a little more throw distance – 7 metres was kind of on the short side. The zoom is really good, and you can maintain focus nearly all the way to the narrow end of the range.

Movement of the head itself is not especially fast, but it's certainly acceptable for the size of the thing. The split colour beams look good, and a bit uniquely, all the adjacent colour combinations seem to work really well together. Position recall seems quite accurate, as does the location of the framing shutter assembly. Getting the shutters to the right position is a little fiddly, but no more so than on any fixture with this feature.

Ultimate the rub with the SolaSpot Pro 1500 is that it's not what I expected it to be. It does heaps more than I thought it would, and yet it achieves all this with a 'meagre' 400W LED source. It's chock full of features, and good value to boot.



BRAND: HIGH END SYSTEMS
 MODEL: SOLASPOT PRO 1500
 RRP: \$16,500 INC GST
 INCLUDING ROADCASE
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.HIGHEND.COM
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.LEXAIR.COM.AU

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RØDELink Filmmaker Kit

Easy as...



BY JIMMY DEN-0UDEN

You've really got to hand it to RØDE, they know how to make product accessible to the masses. They did it with the VideoMic, and they've done it again with the RØDELink.

The RØDELink Filmmaker Kit is a nicely packaged, self-contained lapel radio microphone system which operates in the 2.4GHz band. Short of batteries, everything you need to get the system up and running quickly is contained in the box. There's a transmitter, receiver, lapel microphone with a storage pouch and selection of wind screens, and a cable to link the receiver to your DSLR.

The TX and RX units appear visually very similar, and indeed parts of the casings are identical. It makes a lot of sense when you think about it, why make two parts when one part can do both jobs? Both units have belt clips attached, and the receiver also includes a 'shoe mount', allowing it to be attached to DSLR and other cameras. The shoe mount on

the RX unit is offset, which means you can attach the RX to the camera and still use the optical viewfinder unhindered. It's such a small design feature, but it adds so much usability to the product. Micro USB ports on both TX and RX allow external powering, but most users will probably just opt to put a pair of AA batteries in each unit.

Both the lapel mic and RX output cable feature a locking ring which allows them to be more securely attached to their respective devices. If you already own a RØDE Videomic, you can connect this to the transmitter unit in place of the included lavalier mic – that's pretty cool. Input sensitivity on the transmitter is adjustable in three stages, with a small slide switch performing this function. The receiver has an identical switch to adjust the output level, and in both cases the switch is accessed by partially sliding open the battery compartment. This prevents accidental level changes by the talent, which is good.



The RX unit outputs dual unbalanced audio on a 3.5mm stereo jack connector. With a suitably wired cable (which RØDE sells), it's easy to convert this into an XLR to connect to professional video cameras and recorders alike. The receiver features an OLED display which shows its own battery level as well as that of the transmitter unit. Also displayed is the channel number and AF level. The receiver allows the user to select one of eight channel numbers, and for each of these it can be paired to a different transmitter. Up to eight systems can be used simultaneously, and the RØDELink transmits on two frequencies simultaneously. This allows the system to better maintain seamless transmission in the event of a frequency conflict.

Range is specified as being up to 100m under optimal conditions. Outside the CX office on the street we

achieved just slightly more than this, losing reception around 108m. Certainly it lives up to the spec, though you could reasonably expect this distance to reduce indoors where many 2.4GHz devices are in use. The system uses 128 bit encryption, so there's no way you'll ever pick up the wrong transmitter.

The only obvious control on the TX unit is the power button – press and hold it to switch the unit on or off (same on the RX), or tap it quickly to mute or unmute the audio transmission. A button on the receiver allows mute to be remotely defeated, and the mute function can even be locked out completely. The TX and RX are pre-paired, so as soon as you take them out of the box literally all you need to do is connect the mic and the output cable, and turn on the power. It's absolutely as user-friendly as RF systems can be.

The RØDELink is a great little system which has clearly been designed with the target market well in mind. It works exactly like it's supposed to, and is a lovely example of Australian innovation and manufacturing resulting in a world class product.



BRAND: RØDE
 MODEL: RØDELINK FILMMAKER KIT
 RRP: \$499.00 INC GST
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.RODE.COM.AU
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.RODE.COM.AU

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JBL SRX800 Series

What a self-powered speaker should be

BY JIMMY DEN-0UDEN



We've seen many speakers with internal DSP functions, but very few which are externally controllable. The SRX800 range is Ethernet capable, and connecting the unit to a wireless router allows you to control it via the SRX Connect app. SRX Connect is available for both iOS and Android tablets, and it's pretty cool. The app allows you to drag and drop speakers into locations representative of their real world placement, then provides appropriate configuration options. EQ is available for mains, while fills and subs also offer delay and compression.

Aside from the audio level functions and HiQnet addressing, the display also allows the user to recall preset EQ settings. Out of the factory a selection of quite useful presets are included, and through Harman's Audio Architect software it's even possible to create, name and store your own EQ presets in the speaker.

I think SRX800 is very much a premium line from JBL, since this is reflected not only in the feature set, but also the stellar build quality and outstanding performance. Using pink noise the SRX815P achieved a continuous SPL of 114dB at 1m before hitting the limiter. It sounds great, it's got loads of power, and try as we did we were unable to make it fall over sonically. We think the SRX815P is just about bulletproof.


Do you remember a time when a 15" and horn speaker weighed a lot, felt really solid, and went really loud? If you've forgotten what this was like then the SRX815P is here to help remind you, but with a modern take on the design.

JBL makes a range of self-powered speaker boxes, and the SRX800 series is the most recent addition to the line. The SRX800 line comprises five different cabinet configurations, and we chose to look at what we consider the most common of these – the 15" and horn.

The SRX815P uses a 15" LF driver and a 2432H compression driver with 3" voice coil and neodymium magnet. It weighs 28.6kg, which is just heavy enough to feel reassuringly solid, but also just light enough that I was able to put it on to a tripod stand unassisted. Because JBL and Crown are both owned by the Harman group, this opens up opportunities for technology interchange between the companies – in this case Crown DriveCore amplification is integral to the design of the SRX800 range.

The back panel provides connectivity and control, with input via dual XLR combo jacks with loop throughs, as well as a line output. Each input level is independently adjustable via dedicated encoder, and there's an option to switch each input between mic, line, and 'consumer' level audio sources. The master output level is controlled with another encoder, which is also used to navigate the menu on the OLED display.





BRAND: JBL
 MODEL: SRX815P
 RRP: \$2799.00 INC GST
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.JBLPRO.COM
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.JANDS.COM.AU

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ROAD SKILLS



Editorial by Cat Strom
Photography: Troy Constable



MONSTERM

OF MONSTERS AND MEN

Icelandic Band Of Monsters and Men

VISITED THE COUNTRY FOR SPLENDOUR
IN THE GRASS, STOPPING OFF IN
MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY FOR A
COUPLE OF SIDE SHOWS.



LIGHTING DIRECTOR
STEPHEN ROSE





The band is busy touring the festival circuit with a show designed by Cory FitzGerald and Tobias G. Rylander of Seven Design Works. As is often the case, the sideshows didn't quite have the full design but were nevertheless quite spectacular.

Lighting director Stephen Rose was on the road with the band, operating from a grandMA2 console, and he describes the design as truly unique.

"There are quite a few custom fixtures and that can be a double-edged sword," he remarked. "It's really nice to have something different but when you're touring the world there has to be a lot of making up and recreating. It's a constantly evolving show."

"I'm really happy with what we've got in Australia and it actually caught me off guard how well it transferred. The first show in Melbourne blew my doors off! I couldn't believe how well it all came together."

Upstage on the floor were a dozen Clay Paky Mythos and mounted above them would usually be twelve of Upstaging's custom Martin MAC700's with heads removed and replaced with a dual sided mirror, flat on one side and convex on the other. These were seen on the last Beyoncé tour.

"I love the concept of being able to bend a beam of light which, in essence, is what we do," said Stephen. "Then to be able to turn that head and get the convex

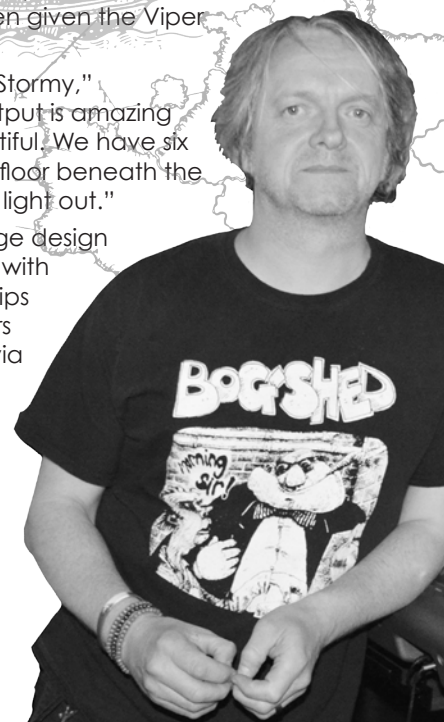
mirrorball effect is just beautiful. Unfortunately we couldn't ship them to Australia so we decided to mount a bunch of mirrorballs instead and they look beautiful too. It's a really good looking show."

Up in the rig were Martin MAC Viper AirFX along with MAC Auras for the main wash and Clay Paky Stormys. The show is designed with MAC Vipers in mind but Steven says he got a bonus when given the Viper AirFX instead!

"I've become a big fan of the Stormy," commented Stephen. "Their output is amazing and the colour on them is beautiful. We have six in the air and then eight on the floor beneath the risers from where they can push light out."

In the US and in Europe the stage design includes eight triangular frames with Upstaging's Saber 10mm LED strips mounted upon them. The Sabers deliver not only light but video via an ArKaos media server.

"It's a challenging show to operate," Stephen admitted. "Having a multi-parted fixture with mirrors and lights has definitely been a head-scratching type of moment. 'How do I focus these again?



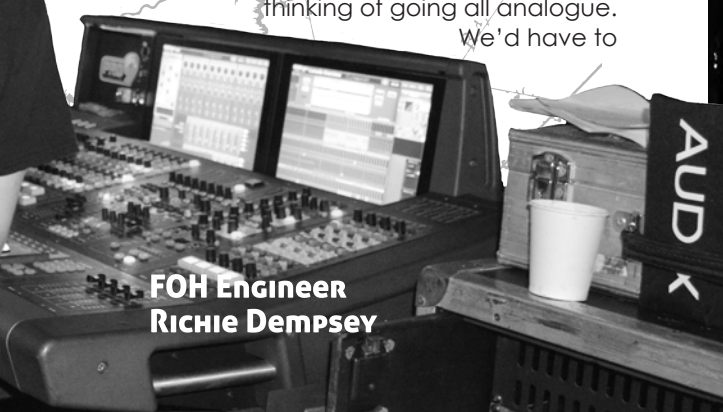


"Oh yeah, I'm not focusing from the light source, I'm focusing from a reflective surface'. The first few shows were a steep learning curve but I love a great challenge and the fact that it's such a good looking show makes it all worth it."

Behind the helm of a Midas PRO9 was FOH engineer Richie Dempsey who admits that the console has had a few gremlins however he does like its small footprint and full set of features plus he says it is fairly intuitive to use.

"Really, it's all down to what you think sounds good to your ear," he said. "At the moment I only use inboard effects and have nothing outboard. I am waiting to see what we have on the US tour as I'm thinking of going all analogue.

We'd have to



**FOH Engineer
Richie Dempsey**



use something pretty big as we have so many inputs. I'm thinking a Heritage plus a smaller console and a whole load of Dbx, compressors and maybe Avalons. I like the idea of using gear that is at hand like the way it used to be. Also, if something goes wrong with an analogue console, you can see where it's gone wrong straightaway – you don't have to flip through pages. I think they sound better too."

With nine people on stage, often swapping instruments and all singing, Richie is kept very busy particularly with reverbs.

"As we're playing larger and larger venues I find a few of the rooms do some of the work for me," he commented. "For example the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York had a nice big L'Acoustics K2 system and it's a large stone room so reverb wasn't a problem as there was plenty of it already.

"I don't like to mix too loud as too many things can get lost particularly with the amount of activity on the stage. If it's too loud it just sounds like a plane taking off."

When it comes to the PA system Richie remarked that he could be fussy but in reality whatever he is given, he'll make it work.

"My background was learning to do sound with four crap microphones, some passive DI boxes which rattled when you picked them up, and some cables that sort of worked. You just had to make it work. However, I would favour a d&b or L-Acoustics PA."

All nine people onstage wore in ear monitors and there were L-Acoustics SB28 subs either side of the stage plus another under the back riser for the drummer.


"The drummer is really loud; he hits the drums like they owe him money," stated Richie. "With a good drummer and a well-tuned drum kit my job is half done."


Recently the band switched from using Sennheiser microphones to Audix OM7 and OM6 dynamic vocal microphones, models which Richie is very keen on.

"The OM7 are really good and the band like them," he added. "There's not a lot of EQing involved, Ragnar Þórhallsson and Nanna Bryndís Hilmarsdóttir's vocals are very different but put them together and they sound amazing. It's not a loud stage but there is still spill but the Audix OM7 is very resistant to feedback".

Finnur Matteo Bettaglio was on monitors again with a Midas PRO9.



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BLUR

BLUR, ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL BRITISH BANDS OF THE LAST TWENTY-SIX YEARS, VISITED AUSTRALIA FOR SPLENDOUR IN THE GRASS AND A WHIRLWIND TOUR THAT WAS ALL A BIT OF A ... WELL ... BLUR.

It has been eighteen years since Blur last played to Australian audiences. Now reunited as a four-piece band, they returned with their eighth studio album 'The Magic Whip' after a highly successful headline show at British Summer Time Hyde Park.

Lighting designer Dave Byars, who has been with the band since their inception, had to adapt the show for Australia as there was not enough time to ship the set from their previous show in Hong Kong. This resulted in some manic reprogramming on top of a tight schedule.

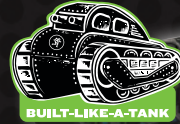
"This show changes everywhere it goes depending on what gear we can get a hold of," commented Dave. "The set normally includes four large ice cream cones with neon outlines and three set pieces in the shape of the Chinese good luck symbol internally lit by LEDs. They have mirrors which drop to reveal a mirrorball and a Studio Due Nova Flower. For Australia, we had a backdrop made with three background mirrors painted on it instead of lighting up from inside. We also had three mirror balls lit by Vari-lite VL3500 Wash FX fixtures as we couldn't get the Nova Flowers."





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On the floor behind the backline were eight Clay Paky B-Eyes delivering some stunning beam effects through the band. The B-Eyes were not pixel mapped simply due to channel space.

"I ran them in shapes although I did consider pixel mapping them initially but as we take them in as a floor package into festivals, you start running out of channels so I put them back into shape mode," Dave said.

Also in the rig were thirty-two Clay Paky Sharpys initially added to the plot to satisfy the British Summer Time Hyde Park show. The concert was held on the longest day of the year with the stage fading into the setting sun so Dave needed a fixture that was very bright to compete.

Added to the rig were some Vari-lite VL2000 Spots and Martin MAC2000 Washes, fixtures that tend to get swapped around depending on what is available.

Dave travels with his own control console; an Avolites Sapphire Touch with a Tiger Touch as backup.

"I usually take the Tiger Touch back to the hotel with me to do a bit of programming," he added. "I've always preferred Avo consoles and whenever a new one comes along, I trade in my old one. It gets a lot of looks as it is quite a distinctive design being white. You have to wash your hands before you get involved with that!"

"I like that you can set up the Avolites Sapphire Touch in such a personalised way; you can arrange things exactly how you want them. It makes it very easy to connect with and operate."

Dave clearly enjoys touring and working with Blur and after so much time together, he instinctively knows what the band require.

"They have so many different styles of music you get to do a bit of everything with lots of different tempos," he remarked. "I'm given a free hand to do what I wish and its best described as really good fun."

On the subject of headlining at this year's Splendour, Dave doesn't hold back.

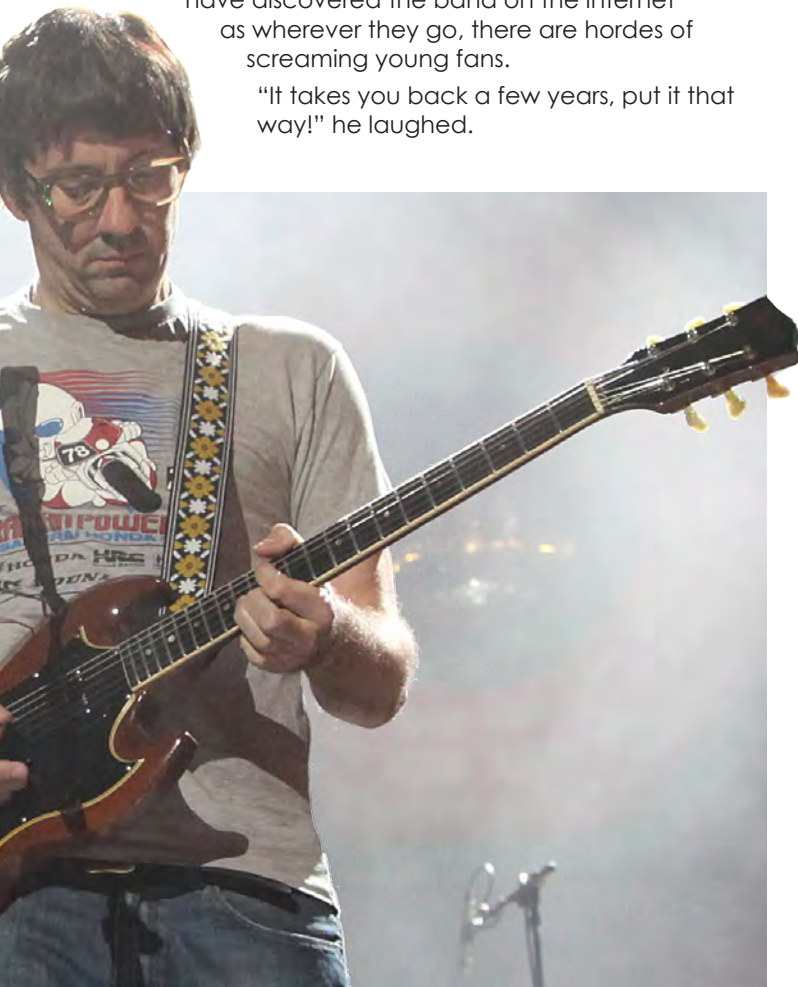




"Splendour was horrible!" he stated. "Our show requires four follow spots but they could only rig two follow spots. Then one of the operators had some sort of an attack and fainted so I only had the one follow spot. Then that one follow spot was mounted on a very wobbly base and was all over the place! Having a four piece band onstage with only one of them lit is a bit traumatic. It was also one of those gigs where you have only thirty minutes before the band go onstage to look at what you've got. However everyone was pretty hammered and I don't think anyone noticed!"

After his Australian sojourn, Dave spent time redesigning the show for a tour of South America. He remarked that the audiences there are not 'of a certain age' as elsewhere, theorizing that they must have discovered the band on the internet as wherever they go, there are hordes of screaming young fans.

"It takes you back a few years, put it that way!" he laughed.



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20 questions

with BRAD PARKER-BLACK



Brad Parker-Black is a highly sought after, professional sound engineer who, through hard work and creativity, has carved out a respected place in the Australian Music scene. Brad has toured the country many times over with some of Australia's most (and least) famous and has pretty much experienced it and seen it all!

Brad's impressive list of credits include Daryl Braithwaite, Glen Shorrock, Russell Morris, Brian Cadd, John Swan, Joe Camilleri, Diesel, Sneak, Matt Hetherington, Mike Brady, Jack Jones and many more. Currently he is working with Airborne, Free State and in particular Daryl Braithwaite, who he tours with all year round.

BRAD WITH
DARYL BRAITHWAITE



1 What are the three best things about your job?

The great energy from a very responsive crowd. Seeing so many towns. The food.

2 And the three worst things?


Lack of sleep. Drunk annoying punters. Jetstar, if you have to fly with them.

3 What do you never leave home without when working?

Microphone kit, torch, and a sense of humour.

4 What was the worst nightmare you encountered on the road?

Running over a kangaroo.



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Impression X4

5 What has been the strangest request from an artist?

To make an extra monitor send on an analogue desk.

6 Who was hell to work with (probably best not to actually mention name but elude to it)?

Her father was a Rock Star in the 60's ...

7 What is the most stupid request you've had from a member of the public, artist or promoter?

Can I have a bourbon & coke mate? I was mixing the band and he thought I was behind a bar.

8 In your opinion, what's the best show you've worked on and why?

The Day on the Green shows as they have great production and are very well organised gigs with great crew.

9 What is the most bizarre sight you have ever seen at a gig?

A support act in a blow up Santa suit ... I guess you had to be there.

10 Who do you admire in the industry and why?

Great systems engineers as they make my job easier.

11 Which venue is your favourite and why?

Star City in Sydney as it has a great PA and it's a fantastic sounding room.

12 Which recent piece of production gear do you view as a game-changer?

Digital consoles.

13 What is the most outrageous thing you have ever done on tour?

White water rafting in Bali ... ended up in hospital when I got back to Australia.

14 What was the worst weather event you've encountered at an outdoors gig?

Rain, hail, thunder and lightning.

15 What would your ideal rig contain?

Is this a trick question?

16 Which band would you most like to work for and why?

Ed Sheeran because he gave his FOH guy a Porsche for Xmas.

17 Do you have a favourite mantra to get you through the day?

Just Relax.

18 What do you think of the Australian live music industry at the moment?

I think the live shows are really strong with fantastic crowds really enjoying themselves.

19 If you could invent anything to do with audio, what would it be?

Silent foldback monitors.

20 What did you really want to be when you grew up?

A racing car driver!



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JAMES DEN OUDEN (AUSTRALIA)

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Audio/systems Engineer SUZY MUCCIARONE

When you're a successful touring audio/systems engineer, travel can be a major pain or a major perk. Luckily for Baltimore resident Suzy Mucciarone, travel is a major perk.

Born and raised in Perth, Western Australia, Suzy's had the opportunity to work with the legends of the music business either touring, corporate events or on one-off large events and considers herself fortunate to be able to combine work and visits home while on tour. She likes the consistency of touring and the job satisfies her love of travel and really, who wouldn't like seeing a concert 4/5 times a week?

She became interested in production while at school where she saw a picture of a console all lit up and glossy in a trade magazine. She had no clue what it did but knew she wanted to be behind one. Suzy's determination to succeed started then as she tried to get into a radio station for her year 10 work experience. She wasn't successful but didn't give up and on the third attempt in year 12, she got in. Once it finished, she kept in touch with the station and returned for a day here and there, but felt apprehensive about it as a career as there were only 2 radio stations in Perth. After she graduated she called to see if she could come in for a day and they offered her the carting job (junior production role) which had just become vacant. When Suzy first started it was still an AM station and reminded her of a sitcom called WKRP in Cincinnati. The small studio housed an old used and abused 8 track Studer and a dodgy 16 channel Soundcraft. They knew exactly where to hit the desk to get rid of the odd noise, or alternatively to get something to work. Once they actually managed to shut down the power to the room when a colleague accidentally clipped the side of the console with his Doc Martin!

Over time Suzy moved into more senior production roles and the station became increasingly involved in outdoor broadcasts showing her a different world with live sound and touring. She was bitten by the touring bug although at the time she wasn't quite sure how she was going to make that happen.

Taking a long overdue holiday Suzy visited America winding up in NYC to watch the ball drop on the millennium NYE. Hotels were really expensive so Suzy used a B&B network although a mix up in bookings found her in four different houses during her stay but fate decided that it was meant to be this way. Being in another country you tend to be a little more open to talk to strangers and while she was at the local laundromat



she struck up a conversation with a guy who turned out to be an audio engineer. She asked his thoughts on the best audio schools and he recommended the Institute of Audio Research in NYC. The school was on her mind when her last B&B in NYC put her in the home of a retired Opera singer. Suzy happened to mention the school in conversation to the homeowner who said that her lifelong friend had founded the school. Within 3 days Suzy had an appointment and left with a fist full of brochures and plans to return.

Suzy's life changed from that visit and solidified the direction her life was taking. She returned 6 months later to attend the school and carve out a new life in America. After graduating from the Institute in 2001 she moved to Baltimore, MD and started working for Maryland Sound International. Her very first run out was with Neil Diamond as provisional crew and as her experience grew her list developed to include some of the world's greatest acts such as Counting Crows, Josh Groban, Linkin Park, Seal, BB King, The U.S. Army and US Presidential shows. She has even mixed members of Sesame Street! She first started working with Josh Groban in 2004 as a stage tech and has done several tours with him including a number of shows at the Sydney Opera House where she says they had loads of gear to try and cram into the space, and that the Aussie crews were great and made it as painless as possible.

As the senior Audio/Systems Engineer with Maryland Sound International for many years, Suzy is confident in all areas of sound reinforcement. She's done it all, from basic podium gigs to large formal events with high profile bands as FOH or monitor engineer or the broadcast engineer on nationally aired events. She's grateful to have found herself in this career but without hard work, the right attitude and determination, Suzy would not be where she is today. She's versatile enough

BY TONI VENDITTI

to be able to jump in anywhere to get the job done and has been known to run both FOH and monitors. She designs and puts the system together and has done a ton of corporate gigs where she's learnt so much about audio although monitors and touring are her first love.

One of the more challenging shows for Suzy was as FOH and Systems Engineer for the "Spirit of America" tour, which was an in the round, arena performance showcasing the history of the US Army. The performers were all enlisted personnel with roughly 30 of them on headsets as well as the fully live US Army Band Orchestra totaling approximately 150 inputs. She used a Soundcraft Vi6 for FOH, a Studer for the orchestra and a PM1D for monitors. The floor of the arena was the performance area and included many horses! The PA was a 270° Arena hang with a separate Surround Sound PA for special effects.

Suzy's gear preference changes depending on what she needs to accomplish. She favours the Soundcraft Vi range of consoles and feels she can never go wrong with F12's or D&B M4 wedges. For IEM's, she'll use Sennheiser G2/3 or the Shure PSM1000 units and packs, which do a great job. The last purchase she made was a frequency coordination software program called IAS, a pricy purchase, but one that will be well used. Some things she never leaves home without and recommends for every toolkit is:

- **Multimeter for testing power. Plug nothing in and turn nothing on until you know your power is happy**
- **Qbox - a piece of testing equipment, basically a small speaker in a box. You can plug an XLR or ¼ inch cable into it and hear what is on that line or send tone down**
- **Victorinox multitool - Suzy highly recommends the one with the little scissors, so handy for cutting all that e-tape**
- **Artliner/Sharpie is always a daily need!**

On the more practical end of the scale she is finding that more venues are insisting on hard hats while any flying or overhead work is being done. This is kind of new for the industry as a whole and Suzy thinks it's a good thing because there are many ways to get hurt just doing the job.

While the field is certainly male dominated it's not something that bothers Suzy and she actually enjoys that it is. She finds people are actually quite welcoming when they see a woman in audio and says the guys can be fun and goofy and mainly have been great to work with, but like any industry you are going to have to put up with some knuckleheads and she's met her fair share of them. Being a woman in this environment, Suzy admits that the rules seemed different for her and she thinks she may have paid her dues a little more than others although she feels that this seems to be changing. Her advice is to know your craft a little better than most. Suzy finds that she learns something from everyone she works with or for. That could be as simple as what to do or what not to do and says "you pick up so much just by being interested and paying attention". She is also happy to teach anyone willing to learn. If someone shows they are serious about learning more, she'll always take the time to teach.

The only complaint about her hectic schedule is that there is never enough down time. When we last chatted she had the washing machine smokin' in overdrive as she prepared for her next tour with Counting Crows. Sometimes the one offs and the corporate gigs are very long days and they start to roll together - at times like that, it can get rough. A reminder that the job is a marathon - not a sprint and while we'll make hay while the sun shines, there's no sense in running yourself into the ground.

Final words of advice from Suzy: Always strive to do your best at everything you do. Have good people and communication skills and always work towards having things up and running quickly and smoothly. Be prepared for changes and take them in your stride. Show the client that you have put thought and preparation into their show and that you care to go the extra mile, they certainly notice. Know your craft and constructively problem solve. Suzy says it's a package deal. Getting the best audio results is always important, but being a good person to work with is often equally important.

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BIZ TALK

September 2015
Volume 107

with Julius Grafton

Banks You Can Trust What is Trust, Anyway?

When my ex and I bought the Bali themed dream home deep in the Wahroonga valley, St George Bank agreed to lend us 95%. As it was during the GFC and given I was technically 'self employed', I was happy.

The 'conditional approval' required a valuation. This is typically just so the bank can eyeball the place and confirm it isn't a burnt out shell or a crack lab. It also contained the statement that the mortgage insurance would be capitalized onto the loan.

Mortgage insurance is a great scam. It doesn't offer YOU any benefit, it simply guarantees the bank will not be out of pocket if you default. The fine print spells out the harshness: the bank must first pursue you and any guarantor to bankruptcy. Only then does the 'insurance' pay them their loss!

No one would choose to 'buy' mortgage insurance. It is a mandatory requirement for loans where the LVR is greater than 80%. Your Loan to Value Ratio (LVR) is the proportion of money you intend to borrow compared to the value of the property. In other words, if you have less than a 20% deposit, then you 'buy' the dodgy mortgage insurance.

With a 20% deposit, you are sweating on the bank valuation meeting or bettering the purchase price. If it falls short, your LVR falls under the threshold, and you get stung for mortgage insurance.

Buying the median house in Sydney for \$1 million, on a 5% deposit, will cost you an additional \$42,275 for mortgage insurance!

Back to my story – Karen and I had the 'conditional' approval and now want to exchange contracts for the dream pad. The mortgage broker informs us St George Bank will take 'a while' to do the valuation, and once done they will take 'a while longer' to give 'formal' approval. Exchanging before then will expose us to the risk of losing our 5% deposit should the finance fall through.

In the end it was five agonizing weeks until we had formal approval. And it came with a sting. Buried in

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the approval letter was a shift in conditions. Where previously they were prepared to 'capitalize' the mortgage insurance by adding the cost on to our loan, they now required we pay for it ourselves, upfront. In the amount of \$18,000.

This is despite their 'conditional approval' saying differently.

Challenged, the broker was apologetic but firm. "We can challenge them, they will say 'tough luck, it is the GFC'. The guy who approved you has been retrenched, they have a new team, with new rules".

All this came up again as a colleague is buying a house and was complaining his bank were dragging their heels on formal approval – so he couldn't exchange. He was worried the vendors would walk away, or take another offer.

In his case the bank just said they had greater priorities at the time, and they stuffed around for almost two weeks before doing what they should have done quickly.

If the above seem isolated examples, talk to anyone. Another big bank disservice I've endured several times is their blind arrogance by only providing a mortgage payout figure on the actual morning of your sale.

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This month ACETA is providing a bit of a round up of some of the activities that it is involved with across the sector. Let's start with an old favourite:



Wireless audio

Whilst it's easy to think this is in a policy hiatus, and to some extent it is, but to some extent it's not. We must continue to be part of the discussion about the future. Our sector is still having to deal with the ramifications of the changes that came into affect on January 1st. Those of you still using 695-820MHz product (illegally we should point out) should be starting to see the impact of the telcos populating the digital dividend spectrum which, of course, will lead to increasing images like this (see above).

Behind the scene, and why this is critical that we remain part of the discussion, the government has started its next phase of clawing back spectrum from users other than those supplying mobile services. Minister Turnbull is on record as saying that the next dividend will be in the order of 300MHz and the estimated timeframe for that dividend is 2024/25.

Clearly the remaining TV broadcast spectrum at 174MHz could provide a fair chunk of the next dividend which brings into question the future of terrestrial TV and the spectrum we share with it. The specialist advisor ACETA appointed to assist ACETA has long said that the business case for the NBN only makes sense if free-to-air TV moves onto it. Watch this space.

On behalf of the industry, ACETA has begun consultations with the Department and will continue these into the future.

Heads up: In order to clear this additional spectrum, it is likely that manufacturers will need to develop some creative approaches to new technology. If it's any consolation, the US and Europe are a couple of years ahead of Australia on this process, so it won't be the Australian distributors who are trying to get their international suppliers to take notice. The European and US distributors will have already addressed this, but it might be worth mentioning to your wireless audio suppliers that this is likely to be the case in Australia too.

In the meantime, there are some provisions available via the ACMA for major production companies and venues to access currently unused spectrum such as that unsold at the last auction or that allocated to future emergency service use. This is not a permanent provision. It will last for perhaps the next two to three years, but it will help with the transition. This is done via a revised apparatus licence issued by the ACMA rather than the free-for-all of a class licence. For some major users it could extend the life of some of your existing inventory. Contact the ACMA or ACETA for more details.

Industry skills

We are pleased to advise that we have sent our careers guide to every music department and careers advisor in every high school.

Too few teachers, careers teachers in particular, realise the opportunities that exist in our industry and in the sectors that we are connected to. For example the creative industries represents over \$32 billion pa in Australia and is growing at twice the rate of average employment. Few would also realise that the so called 'copyright' industries are actually the fourth largest industry sector in this country by value after mining, banking and finance, and manufacturing.

Our careers guide promotes the types of roles and opportunities that exist in our industry and provides linkages to many of the training options that will be available to graduating secondary students in 2016.

In August, the new creative industry training packages - delivered as Cert III and IV courses as well as diplomas and advanced diplomas in schools and TAFEs, were signed off for implementation from 2016. ACETA Board members and staff have made contributions to these new content frameworks. It is always a challenge to dovetail education course frameworks with their long lead times and life cycles and our often fast moving industry but we believe the new training package will make the courses being offered more relevant to industry in the future.

We are also using our connections with the tertiary colleges to help them understand more fully our

BY FRANK HINTON

industry needs for new entrants. One of the key issues is the interpretation by the college of the words on the page of the curriculum. A representative from SAE is attending our next Board meeting to hear directly from ACETA.

Last month we raised the topic of an industry aptitude test and this remains on the ACETA agenda. Part of the discussion with the tertiary colleges will be how they can incorporate into their training, both formal and informal, some of the skills we are seeking. These include basic skills like being able to wind a cable!

Fakes, rip offs and safety concerns

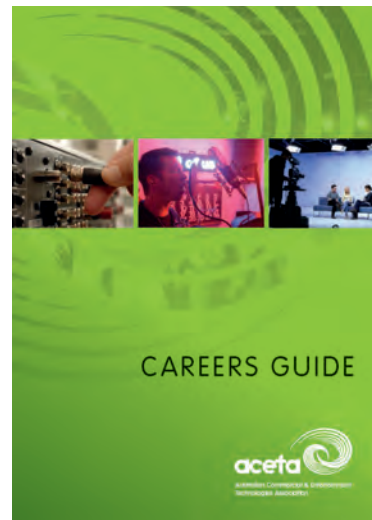
This, of course, is an issue that will just not go away. Perhaps the silver lining in an otherwise very ominous cloud is that it's not just our industry suffering from it. Recently a relatively newly-built block of apartments had a catastrophic fire, which it's now revealed was fuelled by non-compliant and highly flammable cladding. In fact, when the regulatory authority in Melbourne tested it, they pulled the test part way through as the material was so flammable it was a danger to their building. This has resulted in a Federal government

enquiry into how this could have happened and how to avoid it ever happening again. This has to be the start of a wider discussion and ACETA intends to be part of it.

Become an ACETA member

ACETA membership is available to companies and organisations operating in or in support of the commercial and entertainment industry. The more members we have the more we can do. If you're not already a member, why not join?

www.aceta.org.au



ACETA is your industry body, working to protect and further the interest of everyone who works in our profession. We have a new website at www.aceta.org.au, can be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AusCETA or info@aceta.org.au

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Are you concerned about your mate's mental health?

FACT: Most Australian tech crew and roadies have attempted or considered suicide¹!

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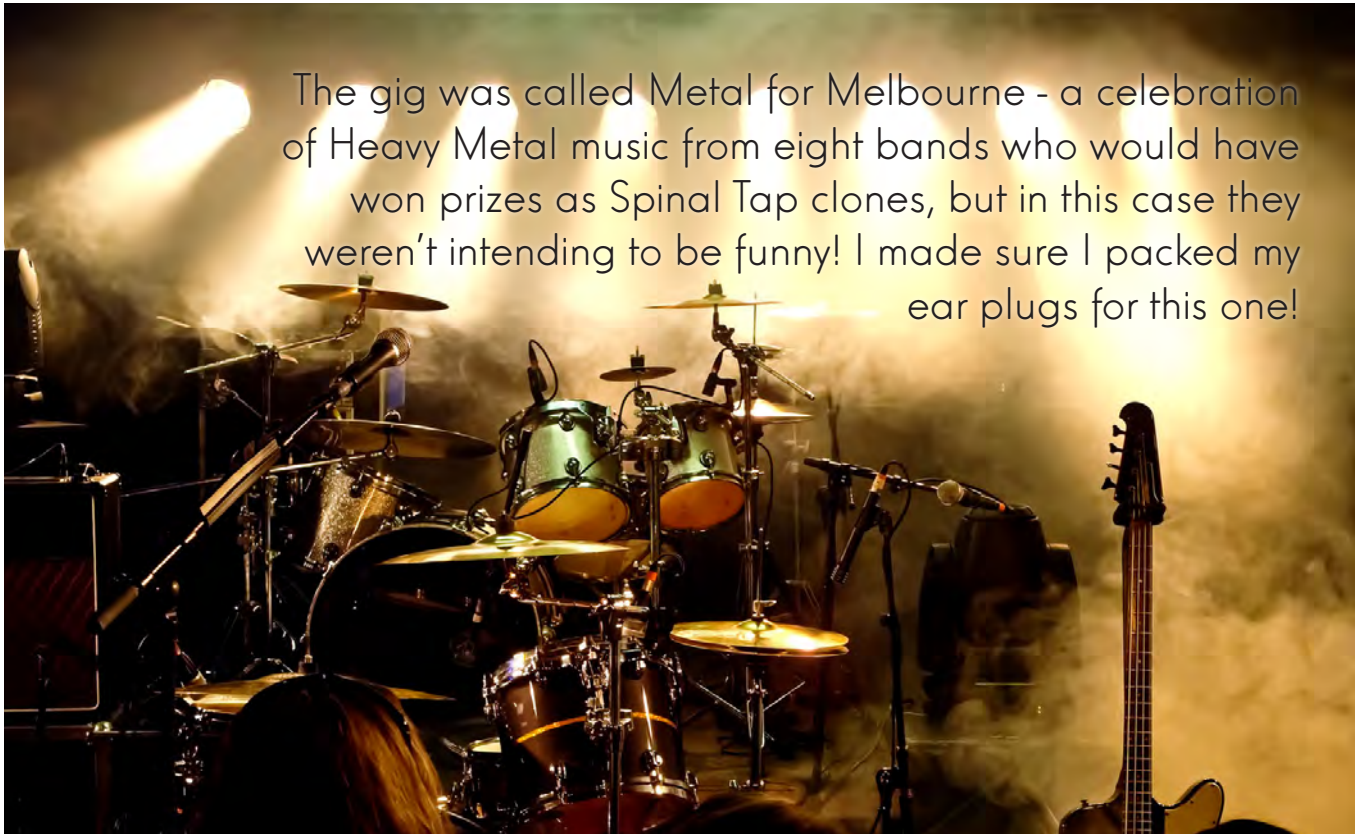
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¹Passion, Pride, Pitfalls Dec 2014



METAL FOR MELBOURNE



The gig was called Metal for Melbourne - a celebration of Heavy Metal music from eight bands who would have won prizes as Spinal Tap clones, but in this case they weren't intending to be funny! I made sure I packed my ear plugs for this one!

What is it with metal bands? A bigger bunch of prima donnas would be hard to find. There were eight bands on, and none of them had anybody to mix, so I was it. That was OK - I'll do most things to earn a dollar unless it involves chickens and axle grease - but when we set the gig up in the afternoon each band came up to me and said "We've got to have a sound check."

Soundcheck my arse. They each just wanted an opportunity to rehearse and prance around in front of the other bands to show how good they thought they were. I wasn't having a bar of it.

"Why do you need a soundcheck?" I asked.

"Oh, we've just got to, that's all."

I tried to be tactful.

"Look, there just won't be time. If you all have a sound check you'll end up starting the show about three hours late."

"What, no soundcheck? S*** what are we going to do?"

"Don't worry," I said "It'll be good and loud from the first note, and everything will be OK. You just look after the playing and I'll make sure it sounds good. Right?"

"Oh no, no soundcheck, oh s***..." and they would all shrug their shoulders, sigh heavily and pout at each other, implying I was the worst b*****d left unhung.

One of the guitarists called me up onto the stage, and gestured at his Marshall quad box.

"You've only got one microphone on it" he said, pointing at the single SM57 aimed at one of the upper speakers.

"Yes, that's right, one microphone," I agreed.

"But I need two microphones so it will be in stereo!" he said.

Talk about a little knowledge being a dangerous thing.

"So if I put four mics on it you'd have quad sound, is that right?" I asked, but my sarcasm went 'WHOOSH' straight over his head. His eyes lit up.

"Geez mate, do you reckon you could? Man, that would sound unreal, eh!"

Smiling to myself I put another mic on the same speaker box, and just curled the lead up backstage.

I learned a lot about drummers at this show. Drummers cop a fair amount of unwarranted humour at their expense from many people in the music industry, but all

I can say is that in the case of these eight bands it was completely justified.

They all had the obligatory double kit, with a forest of cymbals and rows of toms; except for one drummer who came over and apologised to me for only having a single kick drum! As he shuffled off hanging his head in shame, the rest of the band sidled up and quietly told me that they were going to get rid of him next week and get a drummer with a real kit!

However, watching all these guys set up, I noticed that it didn't matter how many drums they all had, during a song they would only play one kick drum and the snare. The only time they ever hit any of the other drums was as a flourish and roll and the end of each song. Why? Because if they rolled around the toms during a song they would come back in at least half a beat behind!

The show was to be introduced by a huge guy dressed up as a heavy metal Viking. Big fur jacket, pants and boots, horns sticking out everywhere, plus a couple of sets of chromed exhaust extractors sprouting from his armpits. He was also loaded for action with firecrackers up his sleeves.

The plan was simple. He would stand behind the curtains, and wait to be introduced over the PA. Then I would pull the curtains open and he would stand there, back lit with arms upraised, and set off the crackers to get the show rolling. It was a good dramatic concept, as concepts go. And naturally it all went horribly wrong! A cynic might say it had f***up written all over it from the start!

Anyway, showtime came, and he got himself all set up in position behind the curtains, ready to go.

The house lights went down.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen..." went the off-stage announcer in his best mid Pacific baritone - "Welcome to...Metal...for...Melbourne!"

The heavy metal Viking whispered to me.

"OK mate, open the curtains now!"

So, I yanked on the rope and the curtains swirled and opened. Unfortunately, one of the horns on his head or one of his exhaust extractors got caught in the curtains and he started to get dragged across the stage, yelling "Hey - s*** - I'm stuck - hey - s***- really...!"

As he started to topple over, he threw his arms in the air to try to regain his balance. This set off the firecrackers up his sleeves, shooting sparks on to his beard and fur, which immediately started to smoulder.

"Hey - s*** - I'm on fire" he yelled, waving his arms around and thumping himself to stop the sparks from spreading, which only had the effect of setting off more firecrackers in his face as he did so.

"Hey - s****" he kept yelling, as he whirled around on stage, crashing into the drumkit of the first band who were set up on stage waiting to start!

God knows what it looked like to the audience. Silhouetted against the light, leaping around with bits of drum kit tangled up in his hardware, and sparks flying out of his sleeves, he must have looked like an electric Attila the Hun with his fingers stuck in a power socket!

Finally he disentangled himself from the curtains and the drumkit, and staggered off backstage, still yelling out "Help - s****!"

The audience stood there like stunned mullets, not knowing what was going on, and then one by one they started clapping and cheering until the whole place was in uproar, yelling and stamping their feet and calling out "More - more!"

We put the drumkit back together, and after a minute or so he came back on stage after a good hosing from a fire extinguisher, beard dripping with water. He thrust an arm in the air, gave the 2 fingered clenched fist salute, grabbed a mic and yelled "METAAAAAL!"

The audience responded with a cheer, the band ground into action - the show had started.





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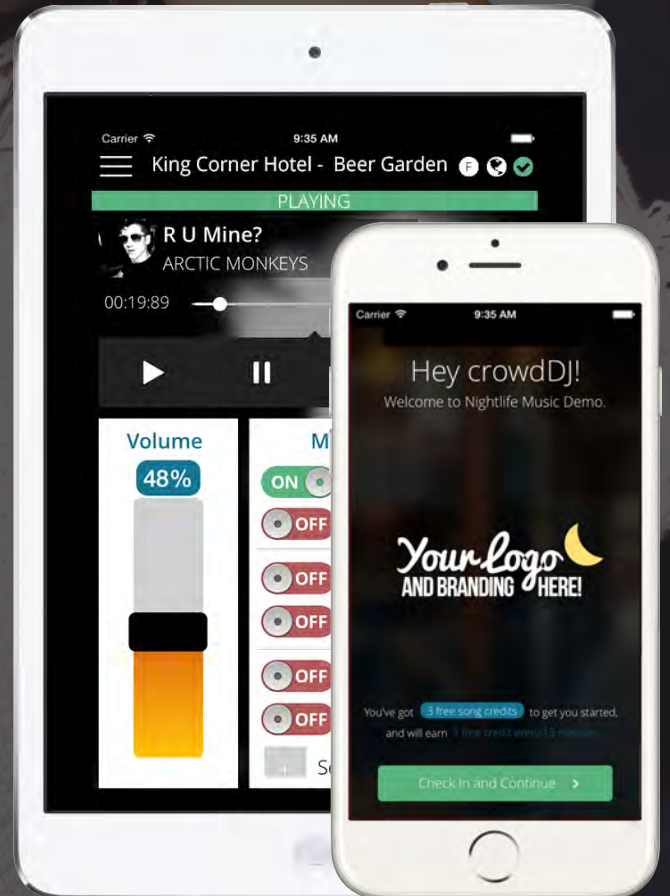


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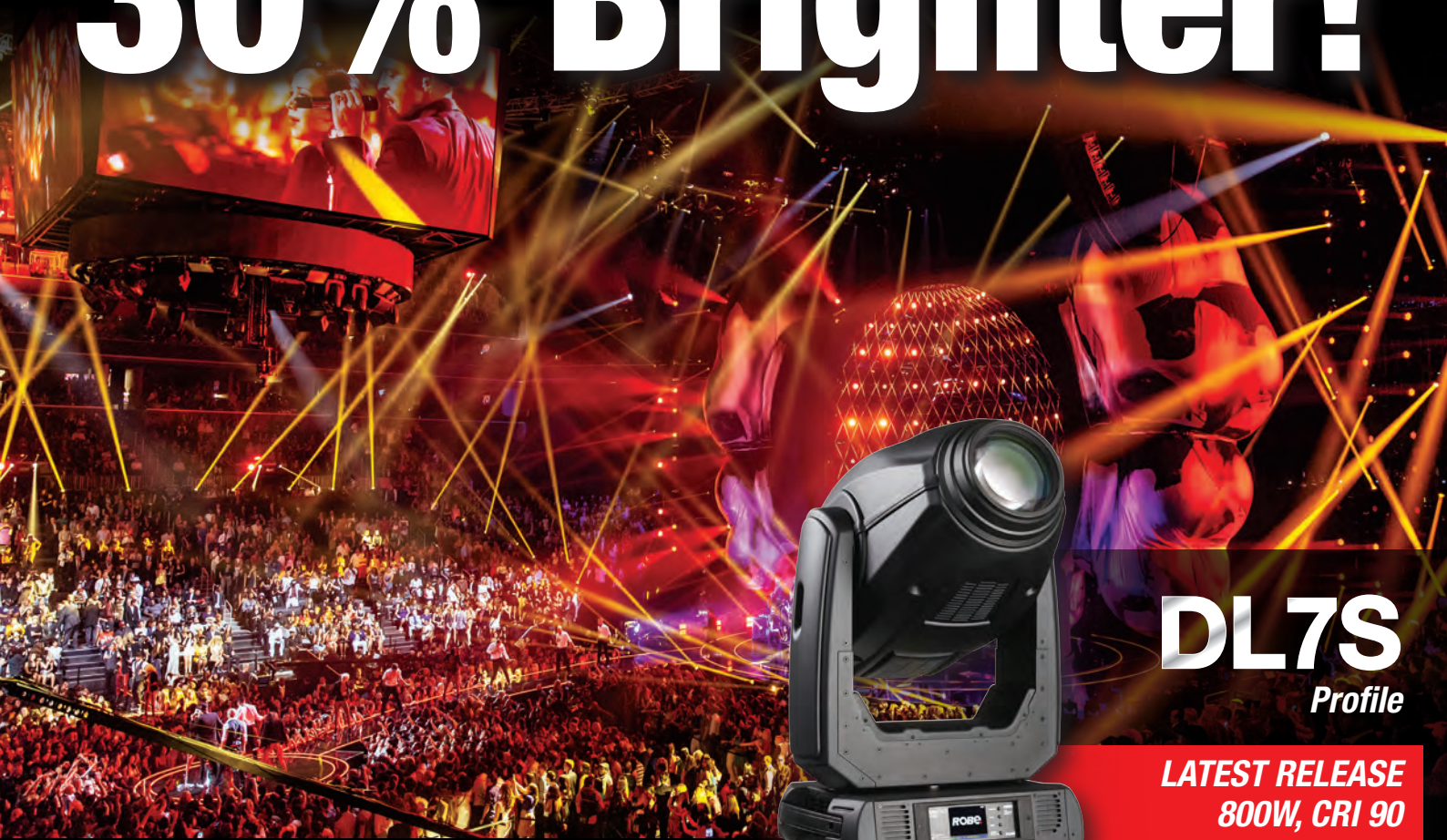
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