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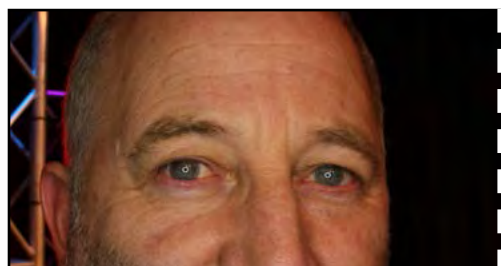
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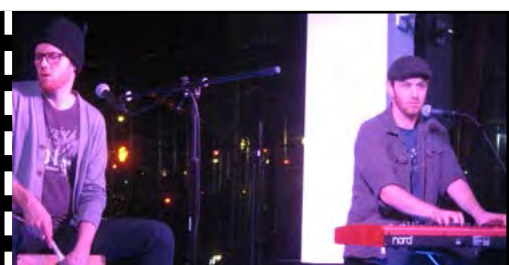
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CX73 AUGUST 2012 ISSUE 73 . ONLINE EDITION**TRIBES GATHER**

ENTECH-CONNECT came and went, now for INTEGRATE in Sydney, August 21- 23 at Darling Harbour. We greatly look forward to meeting up with YOU, and hopefully having a complimentary beer or two. ENTECH (and CX Roadshow) put on free drinks at the end of the day, let's hope new INTEGRATE owners Diversified do the same. Hint hint.....

INSIDE CX

Welcome Lee Romer as the new creative director at CX. You are already seeing changes to your industry magazine. Shortly we will shift our CX iPad edition into the Newsstand, which means you can opt for background upload of the latest issue before deciding to buy. Finally we hope you've enjoyed our new CXtra show on cx-tv.com which has great view counts. Check it out, and we will see you there!

ROADSHOW 2013

Big moves afoot with international educator and author Richard Cadena signed to deliver his famous seminars across Australia. He will do the Entertainment Control Seminar at each Roadshow, and the day after present ENTERTAINMENT ELECTRICS in all cities except Canberra. Plus we bring you a RIGGING SEMINAR which will prepare you for Rigging in 2013. The professional development seminar stream also includes a CUA13 Training Workshop, and a National Safety Update seminar. We expect to announce a lot more, very soon.

BADDEBT SUGGESTION

Our story last issue about Phaseshift Productions and the half million of debt they left behind struck a loud chord, with a lot of angry and bewildered creditors asking 'what can be done'? Sadly the horse has bolted and prevention is the only option, and we hear credit terms everywhere are tighter. Our suggestion: an existing client meets or wants to exceed a modest credit limit. Ask them for a director's statement of solvency, as a signed letter addressed to you, and dated. If they are trading OK they will do it. If they are worried they will not. The letter is a smoking gun for ASIC to investigate if the firm fails owing you money. What about the Director's Guarantee, I hear you ask? Impossible to obtain once you give credit, and useless if the director has no assets.

BADDEBTS: MORE

A \$10,000 bad debt represents the net profit on a job worth \$150,000, assuming your business returns 7% after tax. If your net is 5%, then a 10 grand loss is equal to a job worth \$200,00! An easy way to set your credit policy is to ask yourself 'how much can I afford to lose?' and then 'which customers look delicate?' A really solid bad debt ratio is 1% of turnover – so if you do \$1 million, your bad debt allowance is \$10,000. An even better bad debt ratio is zero. Time to manage your business or debt better.

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NEWS

CX INDUSTRY NEWS

Another Stage Collapses - ESG Australia drops \$6 million

The Australian stage fabrication industry took a massive hit recently when ES Group Australia, earlier known as Edwin Shirley Staging, was placed in administration. The debt book stands at over six million dollars, just weeks after the firm changed hands.

Shock and financial horror followed appointment of Peter Hillig of Smith Hancock, who took over the firm from new owners Butlers Events and Staging – who had sunk over a million dollars into the business just five weeks prior.

ES Group Australia itself had changed hands just over a year earlier, when Australian managing director Iain ‘Spud’ Barclay purchased the firm from its UK owners. His ultimate holding firm is The Joe-E Company Pty Ltd.

Creditors were gobsmacked that the firm, freshly on-sold to Butlers, themselves a stable well established firm trading since 1976, had crashed so quickly. The industry understood ESG was having cash flow issues, with some suppliers on a continual drip feed for payment, afraid to

CONTINUED PG.10



BUTLERS HQ

Technician-on-Duty fee battle steps up Venue audio-visual set for government challenge

By Julius Grafton

There’s two sides to this story. The venue is contracted to one audio visual supplier and hirers are ‘encouraged’ to use it. You wouldn’t try to change caterers at the Hilton, but would you hire the ‘house’ band, and the ‘house’ comper for your corporate event?

Venues love the deal – they get between 25 and 40% of every dollar charged to the venue hirers. In house suppliers naturally love the deal as well.

One firm with a foot on both sides of the argument is long established national corporate event production supplier Austage. They are the in-house Audio Visual supplier for Peninsula, Melbourne’s most avant-garde waterfront event-space.

But Austage boss Joe DeAbreu warns predatory pricing and potentially unlawful actions by major

CONTINUED PG.10



JOE DEABREU

Summit Endorses Guidelines

Industry Meets for Safety

150 industry professionals from across the country and representing most facets of the live production and events industry met at ENTECH in Melbourne. The National Summit on Workplace Health & Safety was convened by Live Performance Australia to address lack of guidelines.

The Summit heard that the newly formed Event Safety Alliance Australia is seeking to carry WHS issues forwards. They have affiliated with Event Safety Alliance in the USA where adaptation of the Event Safety Guide (Purple Guide) is a primary objective. (www.eventsafetyalliance.org.au)

A review panel representing a cross section of industry including a representative of the Event Safety Alliance will be convened by LPA to consider form and content for



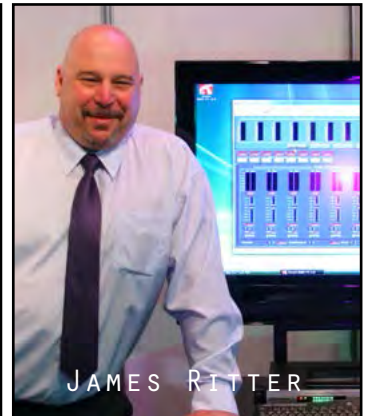
CONTINUED PG.14

Entech 2012 Pictorial – Melbourne Park Function Centre

James Ritter and Graham Rowlands from National Audio Systems had some shiny new toys on show, including the Midas PRO1 console. NAS has recently released their own range of In-Design branded 100v line products including amps and wall mount attenuators. Tendzone DSP systems are another new addition to their line-up.



GRAHAM ROWLANDS



JAMES RITTER



Philips Selecon have recently released the PL1-CYC, a multi-colour LED powered cyc light. Peter McKenzie (left) was on hand to talk us through this and other upcoming releases, including a PL2-CYC and PL1 Fresnel fixtures.



Eddie Welsh from JANDS explains the ETC GIO console to a captivated audience.

CONTINUED PG.14

Sydney Opera House announce Stage Management System Project



Sydney Opera House is to undertake the largest technical infrastructure development since opening in 1973. Called the Stage Management System Project, the new infrastructure aims to prepare the House for the production of content for all its major clients by integrating broadcast quality high-definition camera and video systems along with an audio distribution network, communications systems and new studio facilities especially designed to house the operation.

Pictured David Claringbold for Opera House Sydney

CONTINUED PG.16

push too hard but forced to continue supply.

“If a lighting rig is short something, we put it on a courier. We saw ESG pull up short on jobs, and they’d need another semi of steel or concrete. Their labour costs must have been over the top”, an industry insider told CX.

Labour for ESG often came from Crew on Call, owed north of \$180,000 by ESG.

Butlers managing director Tony Butler declined to discuss the situation with CX, as he says his firm is exploring legal options in relation to the purchase. CX has been told by sources close to the firm that Barclay had been seeking to offload the business for some months, and Butlers were themselves owed a considerable amount of money by ESG. Butlers moved quickly when they thought Barclay offered the business to rivals, Pages Event Equipment.

Butlers and ESG competed for the larger stage jobs in the outdoor events market nationally, with ESG securing some of the major contracts. ESG had two contracts in place earlier this year, and these contracts – Grand Prix and Australian Opera – made ESG attractive to Butlers, based on what they understood of the business.

Several things make this case usual. One is that Butlers chose to acquire the shareholding of ES Group Australia in order to retain the contracts it had (Grand Prix and Opera), which were not assignable. Ordinarily a company sells its assets and brand, and the shell is left with money owed, money owing, and presumably proceeds of sale to balance everything out and hopefully return a windfall from sale.

Butlers called in the administrator when it became clear that ESG was in deep trouble. The creditors attacked the administrator at the first meeting, and voted him out, installing another administrator, this time Giles Woodgate.



“They were feral”, a source told CX “they thought Butlers had asset stripped or done a dump or something – they just couldn’t get their heads around the truth of the matter, which was that Butlers had been sold a lemon and were facing reality. Tony Butler didn’t even secure the assets, so the stages and equipment were all in the hands of the administrator”.

At that point, Butlers could have walked away but they put a scheme of arrangement together, which was approved by a meeting of creditors in late June. Under the scheme, creditors will eventually get between 18 and 23 cents in the dollar, which means Butlers have stumped up almost a quarter of the debt, in order to resume the equipment and continue what they started.

“Tony Butler could have walked away, and then bid for the assets at auction for less money”, the source continued. “But he is a decent guy, caught out by a bad situation and determined to recover. He’ll do five years of gigs and get the money back”.

Technician-on-Duty fee battle steps up

Venue audio-visual set for government challenge *continued...*

venues, typically housing Staging Connections in-house audio visual teams, threatens the viability of all AV suppliers especially smaller audio visual suppliers without the market power of a national provider like Staging Connections.

“We want to do something about it. The ACCC (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) will only act if there’s more than one complaint. ACCC say it’s illegal to force people to use someone else - it is third line forcing.”

“An example - I don’t book a venue. The client books the venue. I had a client call me on a Monday for a job on the weekend. She thought the in-house quote – by Staging Connections – was more expensive. My quote

was \$3000 less. My Rental Point gave me all the costs, even with no discount I couldn’t reach their price! So when I quoted the customer, who complained, they resubmitted as cheaper”.

“The sting was \$2,500 extra for Technician on Duty if we won the gig. We pay them, to supervise us. You know what the end result was! By then I was running out of planning time with crew.”

“I don’t mind a TOD on bump in or out, reluctantly. They will be there, to help us with questions. But I had a TOD for a whole event recently and it was her first job. She just sat there all day. I was paying \$75 an hour for a kid who didn’t know anything. It’s killing the business!”

CONTINUED PG.12

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Technician-on-Duty fee battle steps up

Venue audio-visual set for government challenge *continued...*

VENUE PREFERENCE FOR TOD

Venues prefer to earn extra for audio-visual, especially when they've enjoyed a bidding war, equipped the venue, and then staff the audio-visual unit. Suddenly there is no down-side for the venue.

Venues defend the practice. Sofitel Brisbane told Micenet Australia magazine that the hotel reserves the right to charge. "Before the in-house deal was struck in 2009, the hotel covered the cost of electricity, wear and tear, and use of elevators", Sofitel Brisbane General Manager Tony Chisholm said.

But the practice can go well beyond supervising the bump in. Kieth Wootton from AV1 told Micenet that technicians assigned for TOD usually are inexperienced. "Senior technicians do not want to do the TOD gig, they prefer to do shows".

Joe DeAbreu says many in-house AV departments impose TOD for the entire event, so they have someone sitting around, or even not sitting around but 'rostered' at the expense of the visiting provider. This gets passed on to the event producers.

Ian Whitworth from Scene Change, another national audio visual supplier, likens the situation to the Chicago unions, who wreak 'Capone grade damage on client budgets'. He says a PCO (Professional Conference Organiser) told him over Christmas drinks her entire event budget was blown by the audio visual bill.

"In Nevada they call it Drayage", Whitworth told Presentations Magazine. "Drayage is moving things from the loading dock onto the show floor. This must be done by some closed Nevada union shop. Now the larded backside of US-style inefficiency is lowering onto the previously fit, flexible Australian industry".

CX can concur, having toured five cities in February. We paid \$67.50 per hour, (three hour call) for bump in and bump out supervision in one capital city venue, and did not actually meet the person we were paying for.

But there is leverage to be had, if the PCO or event producer is savvy at the time the venue is negotiated. Our \$67.50 per hour venue agreed to waive this 'next time', so to be fair we will see what happens next February!

INDUSTRY ACTION ON TOD

Joe DeAbreu says he will call a meeting of affected parties, and look to lodging a complaint to the ACCC. The provision under law is section 47, 'Exclusive dealing and third line forcing', and Joe feels the industry has a case.

Earlier this year a meeting on TOD fees at the Meetings and Events Association Conference fell flat, when just three audio visual firms and two venues attended. The Australasian Special Events society says MEA is running quiet on the issue, whereas they had gone hard against secret commissions several years ago, where venues rebated PCO's a percentage of the event spend.

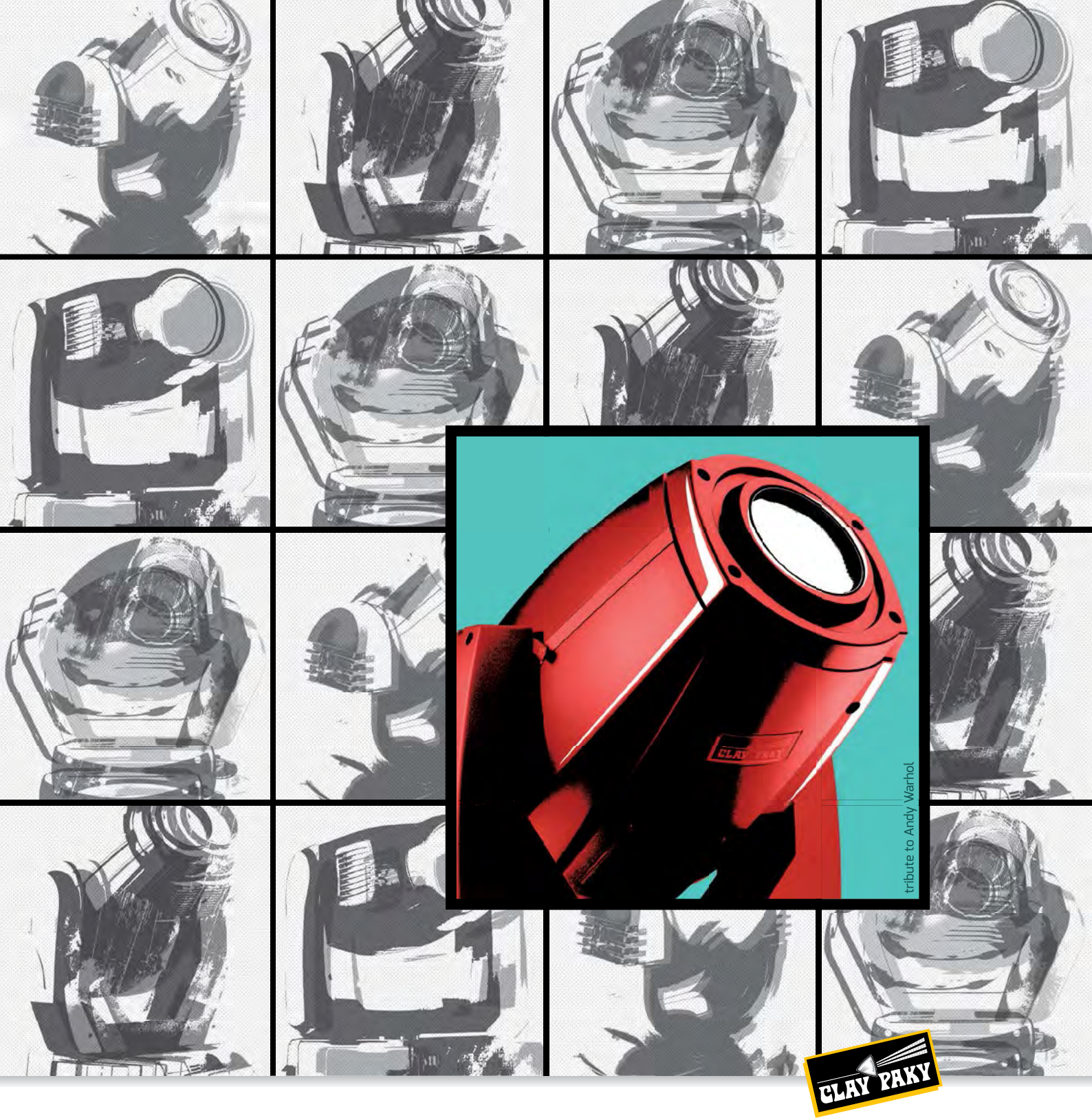
Joe DeAbreu thinks it is time for the audio visual suppliers to unite and agitate for a level playing field. "I did a charity gig at the Westin in Sydney. Austage do a lot of charity gigs. Staging Connections quoted me \$2,000 for the scissor lift. I pointed out I could hire one from Gillespies and drive it in. They stood firm, they didn't get the hire. Where's the sense in that?"

"When the 3 gun projector died suddenly anyone could afford a little projector and become an AV company. You needed specialised technicians for projectors once, you couldn't put them on the floor. Then you needed a pure blackout to focus them. The client had to book the venue longer, but now the projectors don't need the setup time."

"The competition in Sydney is just incredible. I don't mind competing for cost - apples against apples. I have the gear but I can't beat the extra charges imposed by the venues."

"It used to be a great business - now there's far too many players. The in-house company has the advantage with the gear sitting there. And we get lumbered with the hotel charges. But at the end of the day, its the clients who are paying too much. That's what we have to sort out!"

"I'm sure a lot of companies will go under because of this."



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QWO: *Standing Out*

The new Alpha Quiet-Wide-Optics stands out from all automated spotlights. Lightweight and compact build, the QWO features a newest eco-friendly 800W light source and an impressive 7.6° to 55° zoom (x7 ratio) with uniform beam distribution at all angles.

Sharp and bright images are projected with the help of the unique Stay-Sharp-Zoom function. The Dyna-Cue-Creator is an electronic tool helping programmer to combine artistically its innumerable graphic and color effects.

Alpha Spot QWO 800: facts speak louder than words!

Summit Endorses Guidelines

Industry Meets for Safety continued...

Guidelines. The intention is to have Guidelines for all production and event personnel by years end.

At the Summit, discussion focussed on the forthcoming CAU-13 training package and the core safety unit, CUSOHS301A Follow OHS. Arts Centre Melbourne report that they have obtained accreditation to deliver a Construction Industry induction card alongside their CUSOHS301A training. Sydney Opera House Head of Safety, Jessica Doyle outlined developments there.

Matthew Peckham from Her Majesty's Theatre told the Summit that a greater sense of partnership from the top down is needed regarding safety.

Paul McCartney from PBM Safety reminded the Summit that 75% people in this industry are in small businesses, and Steve Swift correctly commented that in concert production, workers are under the supervision of overseas supervisors.

The Summit resolved on a show of hands to endorse the move towards establishing Guidelines.

Alex Mair from Lexair Entertainment is the local Australian distributor for High End Systems. On show at Lexair were the DLV, TechnoArc and Trackspot Bolt, as well as a range of LED fixtures.



Robert Mazzani and Adam Dullens from Audio Logistics were on-site representing some very big green speakers, as well as a range of architectural speakers and Audac DSP systems.

Mitchell Ussher and Lance Dean from Cases.com.au turned up with a casing solution for everything – these boys even remembered to bring the kitchen sink complete with kitchen attached!



Entech 2012 Pictorial – Melbourne Park Function Centre continued...



The brothers Plumb (Tim and Anthony) from Ear Monitors Australia were at Entech with a pile of new goodies. Among recent additions to their line-up are new generic in ears, with single driver units at \$150 and dual driver models just \$200. They also sell custom moulds to suit these, as well as digital RF systems.



Nick Buchanan from Audio Products Group brought the big toys – Tannoy VQ series, as well as the new VX and VXP range. Also on show at APG was the new AKG Wireless Digital system – 4 channel receiver and mics for under \$2K.



Bradley Clift (centre) of PRG pays a visit to Mark McInnes (right) at Show Technology – photo bombed by Simon Barrett (left). Seen behind them are two flavours of Martin LED screen with variable dot pitch, complete with interactive sensor system so you can use it like an enormous touch screen. Also on show: the new Martin M2GO console – baby brother to the M1.



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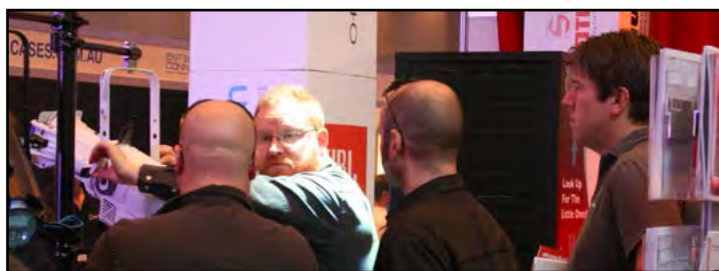
Integrate 2012 - SCEC, Darling Harbour, Sydney



OR SCAN THIS >



Entech 2012 Pictorial – Melbourne Park Function Centre continued...



Also attracting a lot of attention was the Source Four LED Profile - Andrew Maher at JANDS answered punter questions.



Soundcraft Si Compact consoles were prominent at the JANDS stand, with Craig Abbott answering questions.



James Waldron from Syntec and Jeff Mackenzie from JANDS co-hosted an AWAG seminar with updates on the Digital Dividend.



Nina Finn and Mallory Harvey from Jands.

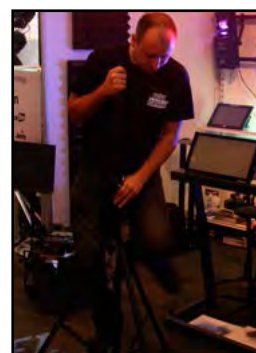


Josef Valchar from Robe loves a trip to Australia. Pictured here with Con Biviano from ULA Group – together they celebrated the 10 year anniversary of Robe and ULA.



The Yamaha stand was always busy with plenty of new CL5 consoles on display for punters to play with. Dante networking meant that you could actually use the console and do a mix with it!

The guys from AVE had a variety of Chauvet LED fixtures and other accessories on sale, including an “unbreakable” speaker stand (complete with demonstration of unbreakability!)



ULA Group managed to put together a seriously complicated stand with more lights than you could poke a stick at – and they even found the time to program the rig!

Sydney Opera House announce Stage Management System Project continued...

Sydney Opera House has awarded the tender for the Stage Management System Project to a partnership between Australia’s Rutledge Engineering and German company Salzbrenner Stagetec.

Custom made Stage Management desks will be constructed in Germany to control paging, communications and show relay. The project will also completely update all foyer and back-of-house sound systems with d&b audiotechnik.

Sydney Opera House Director, Theatre and Events David Claringbold told CX: “The future is all about engaging and developing audience via the multiple platforms the digital world now enables.” He went on to add, “We approached this project as building a new stage for our artists and to fulfil our strategic goal to democratise the content of Sydney Opera House, while providing the best possible experience to our audience, wherever they may be.” The studios are planned to be operational in October 2012, the complete project is expected to be finalised by June 2013.

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Perth Audio Scene Reset

PHASE 1 AUDIO AND NORWEST GET COZY

Jon Caisley is a happy audio guy despite riding a pushbike to work on a 3 degree winter morning. His audio firm is doing well, and the recent co-mingle with Norwest Productions has added gear and work to the mix.

Perth offers unique challenges for all entertainment production suppliers; distance and seasonality at the top of the list. As Jon talks to CX, his crew are prepping for a gig in Pannawonica, a leisurely 1,400k two day drive up, for one show, and two days back. A whole week for one show, plus prep and de-prep. "Sometimes I remind the promoters that Perth – Bunbury – Perth – Kalgoorlie – Esperance – Albany – Perth will half kill everyone", Jon says.

The Perth production scene is reasonably diverse, with a choice of firms offering lights, stages, AV and audio. On the audio coalface the largest firm is AAA who have an arrangement with JPJ Audio that sees V-Dosc stationed within their warehouse and automatic deployment for JPJ client tours. Not far behind are Phase 1 and a gaggle of other contenders, some of which are arena capable and

all of whom have firm sights fixed on the almost built Perth Arena which boasts 15,000 seats. Since the Entertainment Centre closed under strange circumstances in 2002, Burswood's dreadful Dome has been the sole indoor arena for Perth, complete with hideous acoustics and inflated roof requiring that you build ground support for every show.

The back story of Phase 1 is that Jon started like many – working gigs, lifting boxes and mixing shows. He got lucky – a basic gig at Burswood in the Caberet Lounge became more when his boss became ill. "I was thrown into the theatre, and got to mix local acts and some overseas ones as well, like Chubby Checker, Randy Crawford and Harry Secombe".

Then came a challenging year at Staging Connections Perth base, lured by the promise that the firm would move into concert sound. The selling of the firm got in the way, and a year of sticking Bose 802's on stands was as much as Jon could take.

...Continued pg.20

Jon Caisley...
The happy push
bike riding
audio guy.



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12 NEW APOGEE AE5 BOXES, SUBS, DRIVE AND A HOPE AND A PRAYER.

"I had two kids and was living in a rented house. I got lucky and started to put together some gigs for Nick Tana, chairman of the Australian football (soccer) club Perth Glory in 1996. He had a vision for better on ground entertainment, and we did a series of gigs. Then he said, 'look, the hire bills are X, what would it cost to buy the gear?' So I did the numbers, and went back and said one hundred and twenty grand".

"Nick told me to go get the money and buy the gear, so he would hire me to do the whole lot. I said 'no one will lend me that kind of money', but I put on a suit and went around and got told plenty of no!"

Then comes one of those moments, when Jon fronted Nick and told him the finance was not possible. "He reached for the cheque book, and told me he knew where I lived and that he didn't think I was leaving the country anytime soon!"

So began Phase 1, with 12 new Apogee AE5 boxes, subs, drive and a hope and a prayer. "I choose the Apogee AE5's because are punchy, with a nice sound, and nearly indestructible. Gearhouse were using them at the time and it was a good opportunity to set up in the

corporate market as well as sporting events."

Soon a system of Martin W8C boxes arrived, then 24 Nexo Geo-D became 30. A bunch of Nexo PS-15's joined the inventorv. with Nexo distributor Group Technologies offering a lot of help and support along the way.

"Nick Tana backing me gave me a lot of faith in people. If anything a little too much at different times. You get what you give at the end of the day. Like most of us in this industry you get screwed once in a while and you live and learn", Jon says.

A year ago Norwest Productions, Australia's largest audio rental firm, approached some of the Perth audio firms to gauge what form a Norwest Perth would assume.

Knowing the remote and colloquial nature of West Australia, Norwest didn't want to enter the market the wrong way. Their acquisition of Oceania, the leading NZ audio firm had bedded down well, and having a firm presence six time zones to the West was essential to finalize their network.

**WHY APOGEE?
"THEY WERE
PUNCHY,
WITH A NICE
SOUND,
AND NEARLY
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Eventually a deal was made with Phase 1 Audio which Jon typifies as 'an engagement'. Norwest shipped a system of Adamson Y18 and Y10 boxes to Perth, and started integrating safety and management systems, a process that Jon is enthusiastic about. "I have also enrolled in a Grad Cert in Business at Curtin Uni recently. Chris Kennedy and some of his key people have been a great encouragement. Chris is currently doing an MBA himself and swears study is great for the mind. I agree!"

"Norwest are very true to their word, very solid", Jon says.

With increased capability, extra digital consoles, and the support of a large partner, Phase 1 Audio are well placed for the next phase.



THE CREW

TIM McNALLY - SENIOR OPERATOR

ALEX BYE - WAREHOUSE

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DEAN CAVANAGH - ACCOUNT MANAGER

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Facts & Features

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NANO 300 SUBWOOFER

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- Anti-Resonant Polyamide Housing
- Transport Bay for Satellites
- Large Metal Carrying Handles
- Triple-Channel Mixing Console

L.U.C.A.S Impact

Facts & Features

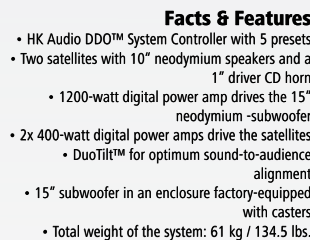
- HK Audio DDO™ System Controller with 5 presets
- Two satellites outfitted with 8" neodymium speaker and 1" CD horn
- 700w digital power amp powers the 15" neodymium subwoofer
- 2x 250w digital power amps to drive the satellites
- MonoTilt™ for optimum sound-to-audience alignment
- 15" subwoofer in an enclosure with casters
- Total weight of the system: 47 kg / 103 lbs.



L.U.C.A.S Performer

Facts & Features

- Two satellites, each with 8" neodymium speaker and 1" CD horn
- 500-watt digital power amp for the 15" neodymium subwoofer
- 2x 200-watt digital power amps for the satellites
- MonoTilt™ for optimum sound-to-audience alignment
- 15" subwoofer in an enclosure factory-equipped with casters
- Total weight of the system: 44kg / 97lb



Facts & Features

- HK Audio DDO™ System Controller with 5 presets
- Two satellites with 10" neodymium speakers and a 1" driver CD horn
- 1200-watt digital power amp drives the 15" neodymium -subwoofer
- 2x 400-watt digital power amps drive the satellites
- DuoTilt™ for optimum sound-to-audience alignment
- 15" subwoofer in an enclosure factory-equipped with casters
- Total weight of the system: 61 kg / 134.5 lbs.



L.U.C.A.S Max

L.U.C.A.S Alpha

Facts & Features

- HK Audio 56-Bit DDO™ System Controller
- Two satellites with a 12" neodymium speaker and 1.4" driver with a 40 x 60° BEM CD horn
- 1200-watt digital power amp drives the 18" sub
- 2x 400-watt digital power amps drive the satellites
- HK Audio DuoTilt™ 3/7 for optimum sound-toaudience alignment
- 18" subwoofer in an enclosure factory-equipped with casters
- Total weight of the system: 96 kg / 211.6 lbs.

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SECOND LIFE FOR HAMER HALL

ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE RE-OPENS CONCERT HALL

By Julius Grafton

Hamer Hall is, for the unfamiliar, the Melbourne Concert Hall. Located on the banks of the Yarra river, it was built thirty years ago facing the street. After a two year rebuild, it returns with a riverside facade, new technical fit-out, and the most amazing transformable acoustic feature we've seen.

The big-ticket items include possibly the most complex Meyer concert sound system in Australia, and a PRG supplied lighting system with the only PRG v676 console in venue ownership worldwide. To transform the acoustics, a twelve tonne transformable ceiling made up of five folding sections can deploy in three modes – Orchestral, Chamber or (folded away) Amplified mode.

The design team transformed access, adding a goods lift, re-aligning the dock so that the street wasn't blocked by semis, and enhancing the scenery lift with a very clever house-on-top idea that doubles its utility.

Backstage spaces were added, expanded and simplified so that gear access and wrangling areas are versatile.

The time and logistics savings in the future can't be costed.

On time and on \$136 million budget, the job went down to the wire but CX can report the inaugural 'tuning concert' was done in a completed venue, albeit with technical tuning in progress all over.

A BIG JOB DETAILED

Theatre planners Schuler Shook advised the architect Ian McDougall from Ashton Raggart McDougal Architects. The builders were Baulderstone. The Centre logistics staff took centre stage in the design deliberations, with almost three decades experience working inside the venue they had a lot of practical ideas.

The foyers were extensively redesigned to ease the long exit times of the original layout, and the number of female toilets were doubled from those for males. Back of house a new 10 ton 8m x 3m scenery lift was added, where previously this was the job of a smaller passenger lift. Side stage and green room spaces were created or expanded and made dividable. A clever new storage space was made by building a house on top of the choir lift – creating a lift with two floors – one for the stage and one for storage on the lower level. The storage level can align with the stage or the basement store – as can the top performance level. This CX deems as very clever.



To speed changeover deployment, a new orchestra seating wagon was designed so when the extra four rows of seats are needed in reduced stage mode, these are trucked in banks via the lift. This is because not every concert needs the entire stage depth, so the front section can be lowered for seating.

As to seating, the original seating vendor was again engaged as a consultant with the new seats coming from Figueras (Spain), as was the original scenic artist who redid the elaborate painted finishes within the auditorium.

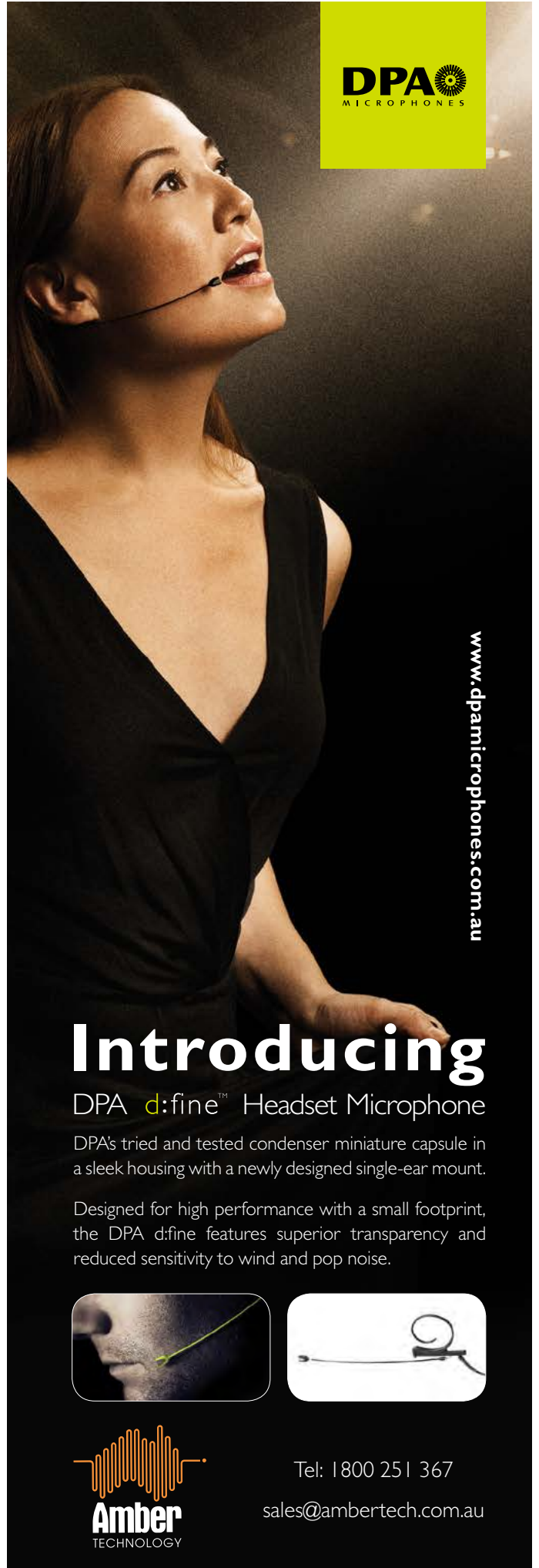
But the crowning glory of the venue is the unique and stunning acoustical reflector above the stage. This is intended to push the natural orchestral sound out of the stage box. The venue had an awkward arrangement of ceiling elements in its former guise, and was considered lacking in the acoustic.

The three primary concepts for the reflector are that in the first mode, it needed to almost completely cover the stage with a stiff and acoustically dense ceiling plane that sits around 13.5 metres above the stage. This can be lowered to 10.5 metres for Chamber mode. For service it can be lowered to stage level.

But crucially it also needed to fold away and fly out, for conventional concerts where no reflection is wanted and to allow conventional theatre rigging to lower and raise. Plus it needed to complement the look of the hall. A tall order.

Schuler Shook designed a five section design with panels that were 3 metres wide (and the whole expanse of the stage) when open but which fold to battens just 0.8 metres wide when not required. These reflectors integrate the orchestra lighting – in deployed mode, you see 56 Source Four 36 degree profiles with lens flush across the surface, like massive downlights.

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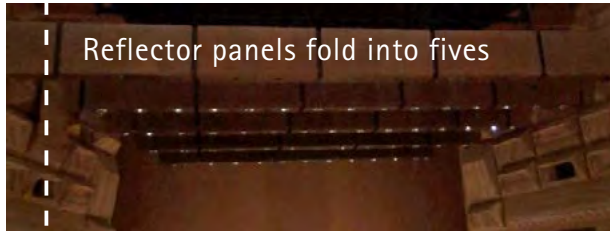


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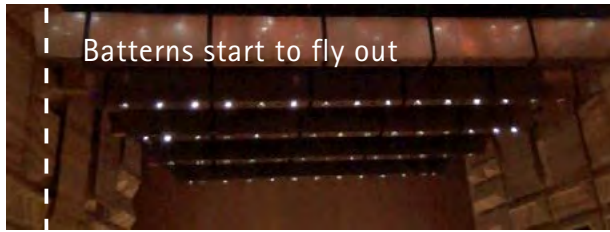
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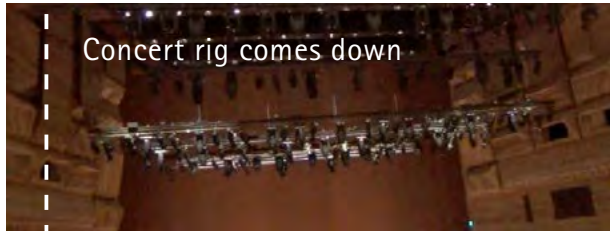
Reflector panels straighten out



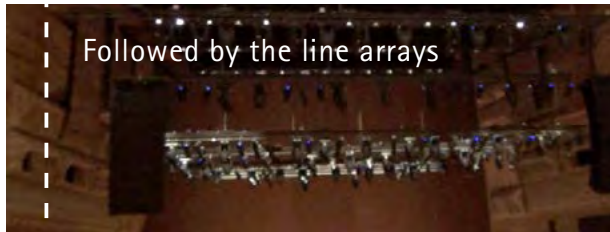
Reflector panels fold into fives



Batterns start to fly out



Concert rig comes down



Followed by the line arrays

Small gaps between the panels align with the batten lines so if needed, rigging can be flown beneath the panels for production support during orchestral concerts. Provision is made for an audio centre cluster to fly below.

Jands were commissioned to build the reflector system, and they introduced innovations like the use of ASM band hoists to fold the panel wings almost silently, and a reflector construction made of fibreglass resin and aluminium honeycomb. The control of the system is via a Waagner Biro automation control system, which accommodates each panel's four axes of movement.

ARM Architecture added a bronze skin to create a beautiful overhead ceiling that matches the other room finishes.

TO REFLECT OR NOT

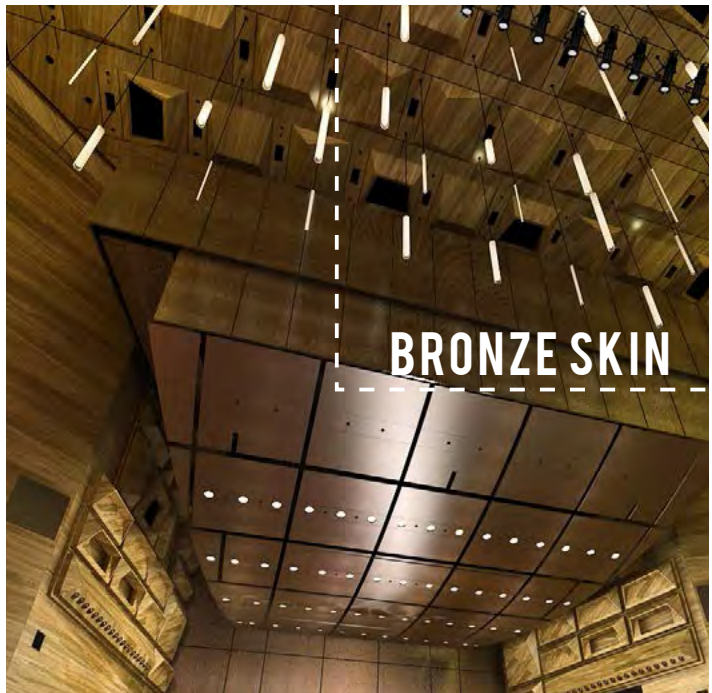
Proof of concept came the night CX visited, for the aptly named 'Tuning Concert'. At this, the Melbourne Symphony orchestra performed the Fantasy Overture for Romeo and Juliet, followed by Bolero – chosen for the extreme ranges and audience familiarity.

The pre show dialogue was run through the 'orchestra' mode audio system, and of course the orchestra was not amplified in any way.

A one hour interval allowed the house crew to strike the orchestra, and set up an amplified band, from the Faculty of VCA School of Contemporary Music. When the Reflector System was stowed, the stage needed to be clear as it was not at that time yet certified for use with crew underneath. CX sat with ACM Production Manager Frank Ward and watched, as the panels went through what could be described as a 'transformers' sequence, folding and then rising out of sight.

Then the house rig lowered, as did the left and right Meyer concert line array – 9 Milo boxes each side. These can also travel back if the reduced stage depth mode is in operation.

In effect the change over could have been half the time but for the temporary need to not have crew underneath. In any case Frank couldn't think of a scenario where you would transition from orchestra to amplified band and need both modes in one show. So it is very unlikely that a transformation will happen in a changeover.



BRONZE SKIN



AUDITORIUM FROM THE STAGE

The Tuning Concert gave Marshall Day Acoustics the chance to measure and compare the acoustics from the old hall two years previously, with now. It was immediately obvious that the orchestral segment was very satisfying, judging by the reaction of the older and more sophisticated symphony aficionados seated around CX. They were clearly there to judge the acoustic, and our interval investigations revealed a lot of happy chatter in the foyer bars. Experience dictates

that Opera and Symphony audiences are very critical of sound, usually with many years experience to draw upon. Ignore them at your peril.

As for the amplified concert, it was all fairly sedate as you'd expect from a music school grad band. It certainly worked OK to our ears. Maybe ACM should have hired You Am I or Living End to rip it up, but that would probably have confused the guys from Marshall Day Acoustics and scared the invited audience.

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AUDIO SYSTEM TOPOGRAPHY

Because the hall has so many uses with two seating configurations, the sound system needs to adapt accordingly.

At front of house and in the stage monitor position are new Digico SD7 consoles. The consoles have dual engines run in mirror mode.

From the consoles, the Meyer Dimitri control network takes over. It handles system processing, time delay, and equalisation for each mode, and monitors each of the 147 self powered Meyer speaker elements throughout the system along with 14 or more Meyer stage monitors. As with all things Meyer, every speaker cabinet has in-built amplification and processing.

From the front of house console 16 sends run into the Meyer Dimitri control network, which then has a staggering 102 outputs – an indication of the various modes and complexity of the system.

Dimitri has two matrixes and auto sensing with three core processors – two to run the system and one spare.

At front of house, a new spacious control position has been permanently built at the back of the stalls. This is

large enough to wheel in the biggest analogue console, and also to allow lighting control – although this is usually from a box above the Gods.

56 analogue input lines from stage and 32 returns run to/from the front of house, just in case someone needs them. Audio is normally transported on a dual Cat 6 AVB network.

At the prompt wing the Digico and Meyer engines are racked. There are two racks of audio patches, and a data – MADI – fibre patch rack. There are 112 channels of transformer split, so each mic line from the stage is cleaned up with these. The often redundant front of house analogue lines run from here. There are multipin outputs for analogue extension or connection with the patch if required.

As to patch, Nick Carroll, manager, operations sound points out they have a simplified system with stage boxes numbered 1 – 12 and upwards. “For example, Stage Box 1 goes through the transformer split, and then into channel 1 of the Digico system. Channel 13 on Stage Box 2 goes the same route. The idea is that we are into fast changeovers here. If the floor tech’s get their patch right here, we just save the console settings, pack it up, and next Thursday it will be right.”

Think out your day as the audio operator. You walk up



**ACM AUDIO HEAD
NICK CARROLL**



HAMER AUDIO DEDICATED TO STAGE PATCH BOXES



Above the stalls niche is an upper niche, loaded with 4 Meyer Mina per side.

Aside from the left and right main array of 9 Meyer Milo per side, which fly in when the reflector is stowed away, there is a centre array of 8 Meyer Mina. Set back in the house are 4 balcony delays of 6 Meyer Melodie and a 500 HP sub for each.

A left and right stalls focus array comprises 5 Meyer Melodie and a pair of 700 HP subs per side.

15 Meyer MM4 are built into the front face of the stage, to support the acoustic mode so that announcements are distributed to seats near the stage. When that front stage isn't required, it lowers and four rows of seating are installed. In this 'pit down' mode, another 8 UP-4XP speakers are installed in the front of the stage face, to do this same task.

In concert mode, 8 Meyer M1D are placed along the front of the stage, to act as concert front fill, supporting the concert system.

Under the balcony are 12 Meyer UPM-1P and 2P speakers, while under the circle there are 12 UPM-1P.

We asked Nick why they chose Meyer Sound.

"Meyer was quite an advantage because of lack of space and air-conditioning – we have no amp room, and so we don't need to air condition it. We looked at what is on riders. We do theatre, orchestral and then bands that often ask for Meyer boxes. That was part of the decision. Being self powered was a huge advantage and the price was right".

"Bob McCarthy tuned the system. It was going to be the late Bruce Jackson, sadly enough."

to FOH and set the configuration of the system on the Dimitri control interface, and then test it with pink noise and pulse tones – all preset so you don't miss anything.

SPEAKER SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

"There's different styles of show, from totally acoustic like a symphony with staff announcements so (to start with) we have speakers in the stalls niches", says Nick. "There are two systems hidden away in the lower niches – a Meyer Cal system, which is thin and steerable for vocal announcements; and there is also a Mina Array of 6 boxes on one 700 HP sub per side".

"The Mina system in the niches supports the house concert system. If we're using the centre cluster, (in orchestral mode) the Cal system supports that. A conductor may have a heavy accent, for example. So we need coverage".



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Adrian Sterritt
Manager, lighting operations
Arts Centre Melbourne.

BUYING NEW LIGHTING

Adrian Sterritt is manager, lighting operations at Arts Centre Melbourne.

CX caught him for a coffee at the funky retro Kombi van coffee stop outside the centre on St Kilda Road.

“We have a downlight rig for the orchestrals and an all purpose rig”, he told us.

As to whether they could have gone all digital, he said the timing wasn't right. “I would have preferred to skip the discharge (traditional equipment) and go digital. But we did the shootout in January and this is what we choose.”

“As a concert hall noise is a big priority for us.” CX can confirm the noise floor was beautiful, we did not discern any lighting fan noise from our seat in the circle for the Tuning Concert.

CX was keen to learn about the decision to buy a PRG v676 4000 channel lighting control desk – the only example thus far sold to venue, according to Adrian. “They have sold the smaller model, but to my knowledge this is the only sale, these consoles are kept for rental”. “The guys were simply more comfortable with this console – they mainly come from the 500 (series) Strand

desks, and the 676 is an easy transition. There is a media server option coming as well.”

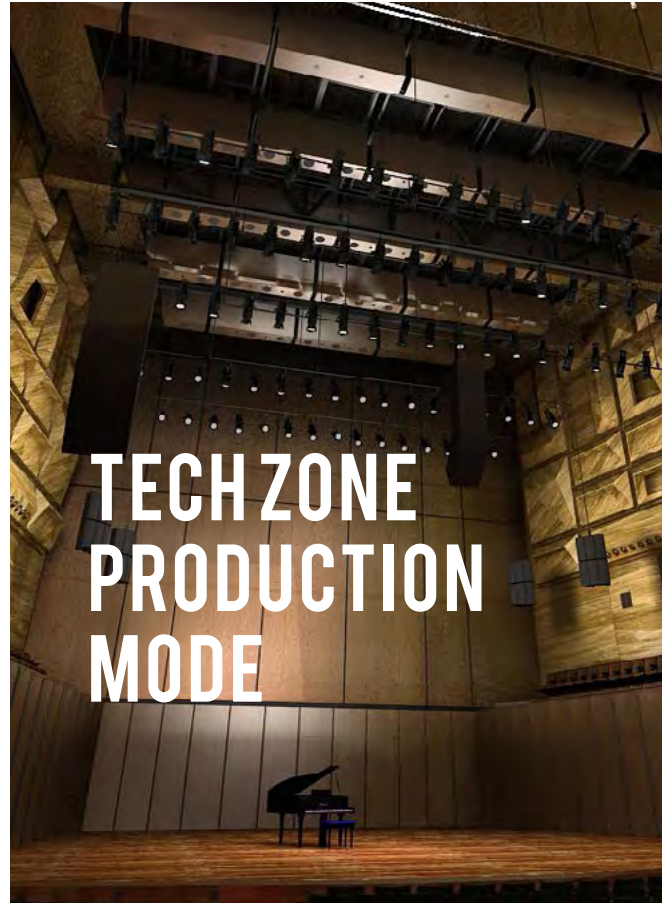
The control path runs on sACN/ARTNET to the dimmer room, and Pathport nodes for DMX out to the lighting bars, perches and positions. “We can put dmx where we need it – we have network up the wahzoo!”

For lighting hardware, a lot of testing took place. The eventual spec settled on 18 Vari-Lite VLX wash and 8 Robe 600 wash for the floor. The main moving light choice was Robe MMX.

“As to the (decision for the) 21 Robe (MMX spots), we lined up a few profile (movers), we found they punched above their weight. Lot of inbuilt tricks in them, (you can) just rig them and not worry. Plus with the 800 watt Philips, they're bright for their size. They're quiet – we did acoustic checks not just on fan noise but also with effects running through them and moving. They ticked a lot of boxes. They won.”

There are 30 ETC D40 Lustre+ (LED Pars), “we compared these against Pixell Par - we got a CRI (colour rendition index) of around 92”. Other new kit

“We can put dmx
where we need it
–
we have network
up the wahzoo!”



For lighting hardware, a lot of testing took place.

includes ETC Source 4 14 degree profiles way out on the FOH bar. 6 ETC Source 4 15-30 zooms are on each Trumpeter. Chroma-Q Colour Force 72 cyc floods. Two Ushio Xebex followspots do that task.

The lighting package was hotly contested and the tender was won by PRG. “They were aggressive on price”, Adrian concludes. The final but not insignificant

component of the lighting system is the State dimming system, designed in Victoria. There are 382 channels of State SCR/Switch, and 12 channels of SINE wave, all rated at 2.4kw. 6 channels of 5k dimming are also installed.

“We have sinewave dimmers for the orchestra rig so there’s no filament hum. All the other dimmers are

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BUYING NEW LIGHTING *CONTINUED*

dimswitch, they are a dimmer and a switch in each module, no need to swap anything. We use the software to turn it into a dimmer or a switch". The idea is that you can connect a non dimming load, like a moving light or a LED fixture, and tell the dimmer to be a switch.

Frank Ward was enthusiastic about the Rite Hite spanguard system which allows quick deployment of a safety fence across the stage front for times of work. Before this new system, portable barriers were hauled into place.



Frank Ward with Peter Ripon
 Technical Manager HH
 Arts Centre Melbourne.

At presstime the system was undergoing fine tuning

THE REST

100 new Rat orchestra stands and Naotec dual colour LED sconce lights joined inventory, Prolyte supplied 44 risers, and the flying system has 20 battens with 10 new ASM Otto-C1 chain hoists.

A Riedel Artist 128 Matrix Backstage Communications system does comms, with 42 headsets and 14 C3 dual channel digital partyline wired belt packs in the standard Hall rig.

Hamer Hall comes ready to rent with all the above, plus a new Steinway Model D grand piano. Almost anything extra can be hauled over from the adjoining theatres.

Finally a shout out for the Heritage Listed decor and finishes that have been retained and enhanced in this two year long rebuild.

As the Hall is now open all day, with riverside food outlets, a walk through is encouraged to best enjoy what is an outstanding result.



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JADE MORRISON

- **What's your gig?**

Freelance FOH operator and audio-visual technician.

- **When and how did you get started in the industry?**

I got started in the industry about 12 years ago when I decided that being a chef was too stressful and that I need to do something which would be less stressful...my first audio jobs were basically setting up and running small PA systems for events like small talent school/music school showcases and end of year performances.

- **What does a typical day at work involve for you?**

Waking up and checking my phone calendar to double-check who it is that I'm working for on any given day. Once I've had 3 cups of coffee and done all the boring stuff I'm ready to take on a day. Days usually start with a truck load and driving to a gig but occasionally I start on site, at the venue. We'll work out what it is that we're doing, set all the kit up, check it's all working, test anything which needs further attention, rehearse if necessary and then run the show. Then it's into the home stretch and you do everything you did earlier, in reverse!

- **What kinds of venues do you find yourself working in? Is there a favorite?**

Being a freelancer I work all over the place, corporate venues, pub/club venues, theatres, flat bed trucks in car parks, scout halls, basketball stadiums, cycling velodromes, you name a style of building and I reckon I may have done something like that. In terms of a favourite I think I'd have to say The Palais in Melbourne. That venue has such history and it's always an honour to be included in that history every time I work there.

- **What tools do you take to a gig?**

I take my ears (the ones stuck to my head), IEM earpieces, a torch, Swiss Tool, a CD walkman, CDs, mini jack to jack leads, white tape, black tape and grey tape, lots of Sharpies, assorted connectors and things which might get me out of trouble and my Sennheiser mic kit.

- **What's the coolest / strangest / most awesome piece of gear you own or use?**

I'm rather enamored by my Neumann KMS104 vocal mics right now, I think they're VERY cool as do most people I use them on.

- **Your thoughts on earplugs at gigs?**

Ummm...earplugs are a protective device and I wear them as a punter in some instances (smaller venues with thrashed systems), but definitely no earplugs as a FOH engineer. If a mix is so loud that you need to be able to shave off up to 15dB or more, then I reckon you need to turn yourself down. If you feel the need to wear earplugs then your audience is probably also experiencing the same need!!! Let's not forget that sonic clarity is a primary aim as well as being heard. Sonic clarity should never be compromised by having to wear earplugs. (CX agrees wholeheartedly!)

- **What's the one thing on your production spec you can't do without?**

Hmmm, the FOH PA??? ...seriously though, my Sennheiser mics are a must have, then I'd have to say probably a systems engineer who really knows their gig and is easy to work with. Apart from that a CD player would be the next thing, as I can't deal with mp3 stuff through a PA for the purposes of 'tuning' and testing.

- **What's the best part about your job?**

Getting to work alongside some really good people and constantly having the opportunity to learn from others. The variety in venues and jobs is also great as it keeps me on my toes.

- **What's the worst part of your job?**

Hmmm...repacking the truck at the end of the night after an 18 hour day is pretty bad...but I also very occasionally have a few issues with some of the 'boys' out there who seem to find it amusing when I turn up at a gig. Sometimes the mentality of some of the old school dudes, be they musicians or tech crew can be bit off putting.

- **Do you have a favourite band or artist you've worked with?**

I mostly like everyone I work with but there's actually 2 favourites for me; my sentimental favourite is an original Melbourne band called Six Hours. They're just a straight up rock band, musically unpretentious, good guys and like a second family to me. The other one is actually my friends' cover band, Matt Bradshaw & G-Force who are a bunch of musos who do what they do really well and are very entertaining to watch. They'd be one of the very few cover bands I would go and see if I were having a night off.

- **Favourite console for FOH duties?**

I love analogue consoles, so I'm going to have to say the Soundcraft GB8-32, anything Midas and the PM3000C at The Corner Hotel in Melbourne.

• **What's your most memorable gig?**

My most memorable gig was at Brisbane Convention Centre in 2007 when Six Hours were supporting Alice Cooper. If memory serves me correctly there was a Nexo Geo something or other FOH PA in the room which sounded amazing and everything that I did that night just seemed to work really well. What made it even more memorable was the fact that Alice's FOH and monitor guys both sought me out after the support set was done to give me a big thumbs up on the mix.

• **Who was / is your mentor?**

I'm fortunate enough to have my partner, Andy Shanahan who is a very accomplished live & studio engineer as well as a Senior Lecturer at JMC Academy and NMIT as a mentor. Living with someone who understands audio and the business of freelancing and touring makes my life really easy because I have a 'go to guy' if I have questions and he also supports my every endeavour unreservedly.

• **Why so few girls in the biz?**

I can't speak for all of the girls out there because I've never been your 'average' girl but in my mind, girls are brought up do to 'nice' things and are not encouraged to have mechanical and spatial aptitudes, so it makes it hard for them when they do get into the industry to actually work with systems in part or as a whole because conceptually it's not something which they've been exposed to in their formative years. The physical element of the job is also a consideration as we're not built the same as the boys so that can be a deterrent and I think the residual 'chauvinist' attitude that 'girls can't do audio' (which is something I've experienced a bit of) can also put girls off.

• **Any tips for newcomers to the industry? Best advice you were ever given and who by?**

Newcomers should always remember that a positive attitude backed up by some skill and the ability to ask questions if you don't know something are 3 things which the older heads value. Not asking questions is the biggest mistake any newcomer can make. You look like a bigger idiot if you get something really wrong, than if you have to ask a question because you don't understand what you've been asked to do. In terms of advice, I was told "you have 2 ears and 1 mouth, use them in the proportion which they were given."



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TECH TOPIC

Just a phase he's going through?

Why mic phase screws with the brain

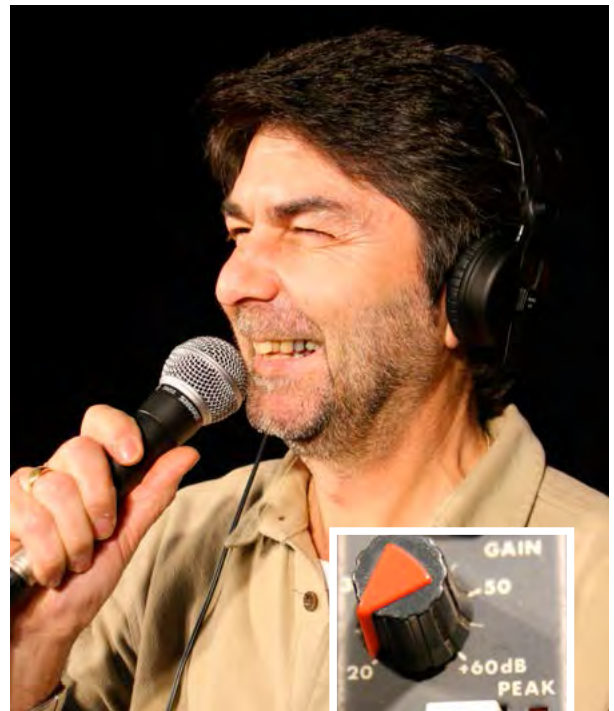
By John Maizels

On July CX-TV in the CXtra show we discuss an incident which happened on one of the larger stands at InfoComm. Here's the back-story.

An array of mics set up for testing via headphones is very compelling: press a button, listen to your voice, compare to other microphones. Punters walked up, put on headphones and trotted out their favourite microphone checking sequences. "Testing, one two three". "Two, two, TTTWO". "Hello. Oh, do I really sound like that"? "Coming to a break, news after this". Yep, no trouble picking the professionals.

Product-comparison displays are standard stuff for a trade show, and very welcome. Particularly welcome in this case, since there were two generations of a well known mic and a good chance to see what substantial improvements might have been made to an industry stalwart. I took the test. What's wrong with this picture is that one of the twelve or so mics on display, and only one, was out of phase. That made fair comparison impossible. It might have even cost the exhibitor sensible queries about the outphased mic.

But, I hear you ask, out of phase with what? How can a single device be out of phase with itself? It's a really good question, and I'm glad you asked. It can't be out of phase with itself, but when you listen on headphones (and as you read this, think "what happens with an in-ear-monitor?") you have a very specific situation in which you can either support the brain's view of normality, or confuse the crap out of it. The brain doesn't deal well with certain phenomena that can't happen in real life. The video industry learned about 20 years ago that audio should never arrive before the related picture. The brain can handle audio being late by up to four TV frames, but objects strongly to audio



Tech IN PHASE



Tech OUT OF PHASE

arriving even two frames early. That never happens in real life because sound travels more slowly than light.

Similarly, you have spent your whole life listening to your own voice with a very specific phase relationship from your mouth to your ear. And also through the bones in your head. Reversing the phase between a performer's microphone and the performer's ear creates a subjective effect that ranges between barely noticeable and really horrible. How bad depends on the person, and it's something to do with brain wiring and experience. It's very personal: some people don't notice and others notice immediately. Those who do notice report that the out-phased version sounds thinner, or weird, or use some other non-technical subjective terms.

A simple comparison with another mic proved that there really was an out of phase condition (press both buttons, talk, note the cancellation). To his credit, the Stand-Man-Product-Manager-Senior-Person humoured me to the extent of checking the setup. With no phase buttons on the mixer, the only remaining possibilities were the mic cable ("new out of the packet yesterday"), and the mic ("out of the box"). To his infinite discredit, he wandered off as soon as he'd discovered that it couldn't be fixed on the spot. I didn't go back, I don't know if it was fixed at the show, and I'm not buying a mic from him - ever. Sort of negates the whole point of spending time, effort and money on a trade show exhibit.



TECHPOINT:
THE PHASE SWITCH ON THE MIXER INPUT CHANNEL MAY AFFECT A PERFORMER WEARING HEADPHONES OR IN-EAR MONITORS. BE AWARE!

Moral: If the customer notices, then it doesn't matter whether you notice or not, or you think it's important or not. It needs to be addressed, or you won't have a customer.

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An evening of "The Groovy Set" get together with Producer Jimi Wyatt to celebrate the opening night of Ginger Recording Studios.

The opening night soirée was awash with admiration as glasses clinked in acoustic celebration at the official opening party of Ginger Recording Studios at Cremorne (Vic).

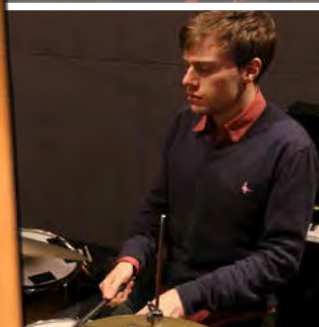
With entertainment on tap by the very talented Nat Bartsch Trio - pianist Nat Bartsch, Jeremy Hopkins on the kit & Joss Holt on bass, showcasing surrounds for admirers, touching on the acoustic niceness of Jimi's creative studio spaces.

Ginger Studios floorplan & equipment brings the studios acoustic space to the forefront.

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Ginger Studios has a 48 Channel Solid State Logic Duality SE and ADAM S5X-H main monitors. Nearfields are Dynaudio AIR 6 with Surround - 5 x Dynaudio AIR 15. Digidesign ProTools HD3 PCIe operating ProTools HD9 does the recorder gig!

GINGER RECORDING STUDIOS OPENING PARTY.



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on the kit & Joss Holt on bass.



Producer Jimi Wyatt with Martin Pullan, Fiona Horman & Adam Quaife.



Edward Banks, Scott Hay & Robert Fittock.



Renata Cummings, Amaryah Paul, Sarah Fialkowski & Hannah Janson.



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www.ginger-studios.com

By Lee Romer



Photographer Richard Pendavingh

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OPTOMA EW675UT ULTRA SHORT THROW PROJECTOR

By Jimmy Den-Ouden

Wow. It was the same word uttered by several of our colleagues when they walked past the EW675UT I'd setup in the office. Something about this projector just impresses people, and in a crowd of engineers that's a very solid achievement indeed.

Reviewing a projector can be a real tough gig. Fundamentally, they mostly do the same thing. The EW675UT marches to its own drum. It's a 3200 Lumen ultra short throw projector. That means it works in bright rooms with very little throw distance required. It is capable of producing a 60" image at 39cm projection distance, in native WXGA (1280x800) resolution (that's 720p HD). Maximum input resolution is UXGA (1600x1200). Specified lamp life is 3000 hours, or 2500 in ECO mode.

The EW675UT seems to us to be very clearly designed for installs. To plug anything into it you need to unscrew and remove a side cover panel – cables get there via a nicely "padded" cable entry hole in the base (or the top if you're ceiling mounting it). Changing the lamp is a single screw operation, and could conceivably be done with the unit in situ. With all this install talk in mind, I know at least one person who uses the short throw (as opposed to ultra short) model in a mobile application with very pleasing results.

How the EW675UT achieves such big images is tied in with the lensing and reflector arrangement. It's pretty funky, and only in the past few years have optic systems such as this become an affordable reality. Think about how much a short throw lens for a normal projector costs – commonly twice the price of the projector. Optoma has given users a way to avoid this expense by integrating the two.

Due to the nature of the optical system, small changes in projector positioning cause radically big changes to the projected image. Twisting the projector to the left or right not only moves the image, but also causes huge changes to horizontal keystoneing. This means that when installing the unit, it's CRITICAL to position it correctly. There's a vertical keystone adjustment, but that won't help you if the thing is in the wrong lateral position. Measure twice! Keep in mind also that seemingly minor movements in screen position can affect the image quality too.

A really nice point about this style of projection involves presenters. As a presenter, it's annoying when

you're trying to look at your audience while being blinded by a front style projector. If you're being blinded then it means the projection is hitting you – not the screen where it needs to be. Short throw basically eliminates this as a problem.

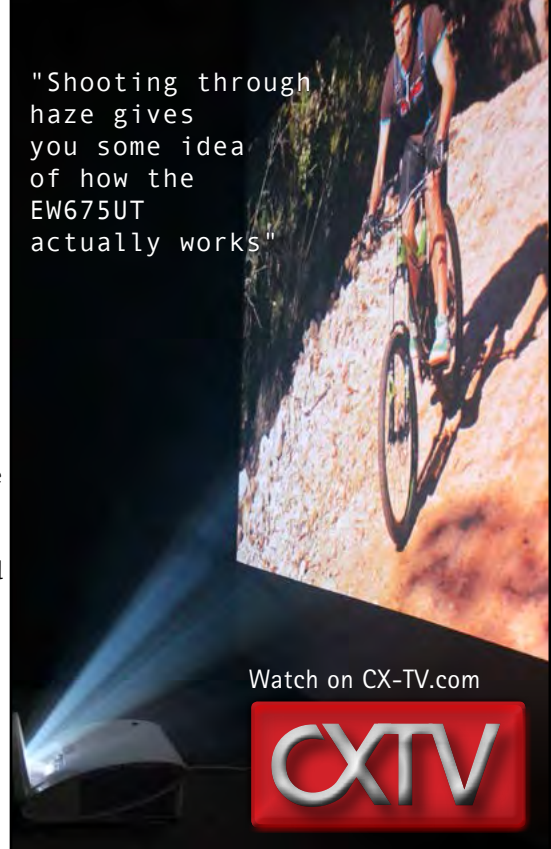
There's lots of connectivity on the EW675UT. Composite, S-Video, HDMI and dual RGB ports are all available, as is a USB port to project off a thumb drive. There's no DVI port which I found a bit weird, but it's not exactly a big problem. RS-232 and RJ45 ports allow both serial and Ethernet based remote control, and it even interfaces to systems such as Crestron RoomView. A Kensington lock slot not only secures the projector, but also prevents people from unplugging things from it. You can also lockout the panel controls with a password.

For educational & presenter applications, the EW675UT is already geared up to be interactive. Just add the appropriate accessory "pen", install some software on your computer, connect a USB cable and you're good to go. Very cool.

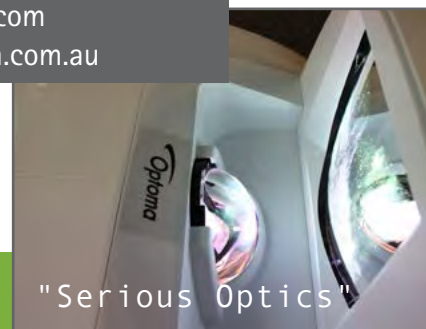
The 5yr colour guarantee and 3000:1 contrast ratio add to its appeal. I found some minor tweaks to contrast and brightness were needed (the factory settings are a bit hot), but with this done I was very pleased with the image quality. Considering how it actually gets there, it's even more impressive. Winner.

Brand: Optoma
Model: EW675UT
RRP: \$1999, add \$119 for the interactive pen
Product Info: www.optoma.com
Distributor: www.ambertech.com.au

"Shooting through haze gives you some idea of how the EW675UT actually works"



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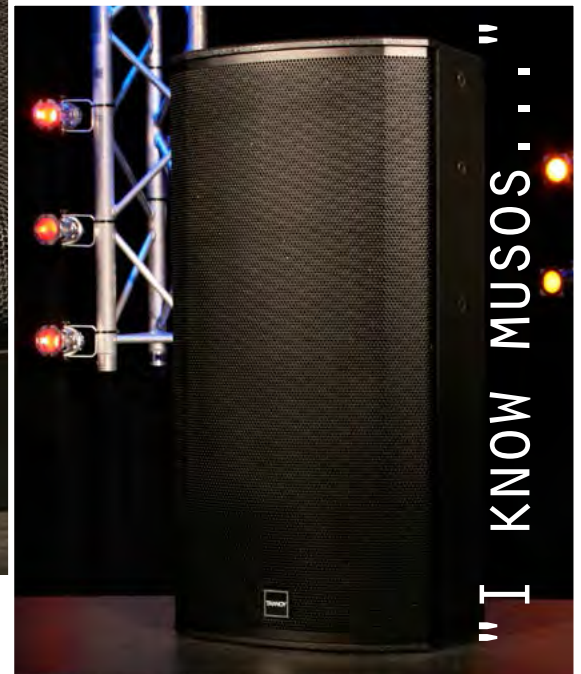
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Tannoy

VXP12.2Q SELF POWERED SPEAKER

By Jimmy Den-Ouden



TANNOY GOES (NEARLY ALL) MODERN

TANNOY has long been a strong exponent of point source speaker technology. Their system is called Dual Concentric, and it's been in use for a pretty long time now. I've heard legend of Tannoy dual concentric drivers being installed in speaker cabinets constructed from marble – I guess that's one way to avoid cabinet resonance, but it's definitely not a lightweight solution.

The VXP range of boxes doesn't run in quite the same vein, but you definitely know they're well constructed. The smallest box is a 6", with the line extending all the way up to a 15". The models are all internally self powered courtesy of a collaboration with Lab.Gruppen. The VX range features the same cabinets minus the internal amps – we checked out my pick from the line: the VXP12.2Q.

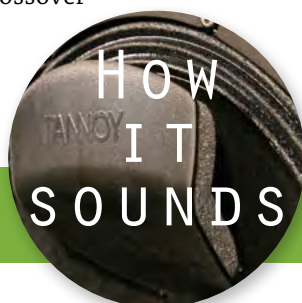
First thing to know about the VXP12.2Q is that by modern standards, it's very heavy. 35kg in fact, which by our reckoning makes it a two person lift. For solo operator situations I'd probably look elsewhere in the range. Some of the weight is doubtlessly attributable to the dual 12" driver arrangement, one of which is a dual concentric unit. The internal Lab.Gruppen IDEEA amp module is a single channel unit, with crossover functions handled at speaker level. Strange, but we assume it's a price driven decision.

Whereas previous generations of

dual concentric boxes tended to exhibit conical dispersion characteristics, the VXP12.2Q has a 75 x 40 degree pattern. How they've achieved this is by implementation of a waveguide on the dual concentric driver. The DC driver can be rotated 90 degrees to spin the dispersion pattern – so the box works in horizontal or vertical orientation. That said, 6 screws to remove the front grille and another 8 for the driver makes it a time consuming operation.

The back panel of the VXP12.2Q is pretty simple. PowerCon in, plus XLR in and loop through. There's an attenuator, a power switch, HPF switch, and an "auto power" switch, as well the expected complement of power, signal and limit LEDs. The box can basically shut itself down to draw virtually no current (<1W) when there's no signal present – this happens after a preset delay. As to the HPF function, I don't really see the point – there's no question it's a full range box with stated frequency response of 60Hz-25kHz (-3dB). Max SPL is 125dB average, 131dB peak. That's rather loud. I suppose if you wanted to integrate the cabinet with subs you could engage the HPF (which kicks in around 100Hz), but really in such an application I'd expect you could get away with a smaller speaker.

BASICALLY, it sounds awesome. Clean and controlled high frequency response gives



vocal clarity without the overly sibilant top end we hear in a lot of modern speaker systems. Low end is present without being overbearing. For my liking the low end needs an EQ bump around the 63Hz area. There's definitely enough driver area to push more big air than the default response is designed to. I've found in the past that Tannoy cabinets traditionally have a sort of warm fuzziness (the feel good kind of fuzzy – not the bad distortion kind) in the low mid region (around 200Hz-ish). The VXP12.2Q doesn't. It seems to have better bottom end capability but with less emphasis on the low mid region. In other words, the old box worked better for jazz, while this one is killer for dubstep and other electronic genres. With some subs added in for the 60Hz downward region you could potentially build a terrifying nightclub PA with these.

An interesting side effect of this change in character is that the cabinet is incredibly well behaved as a wedge. Plugging a standard vocal mic in via a neutral pre-amp I was able to dial up huge vocal level with no EQ at all. A few little tweaks would see even higher levels. The cabinet has the legs of a serious concert wedge, and used in pairs would be devastatingly loud. Probably too loud. Perhaps a result of the dual concentric thing, the VXP12.2Q was very resilient to feeding back when used as a wedge. It might just be my new favourite, save for one thing.

I know musos. They like to stand on wedges, and this is a problem for the VXP. The front grille is solid yet flexible, and there's no internal bracing. Were I using these as wedges, I'd be pulling the grilles off and sticking a metal rail between the drivers to prop the grille up when some genius drops their clodhopper on top. It's a minor mod which would possibly void warranty, but then again wouldn't a Blundstone through a bass driver do the same thing?

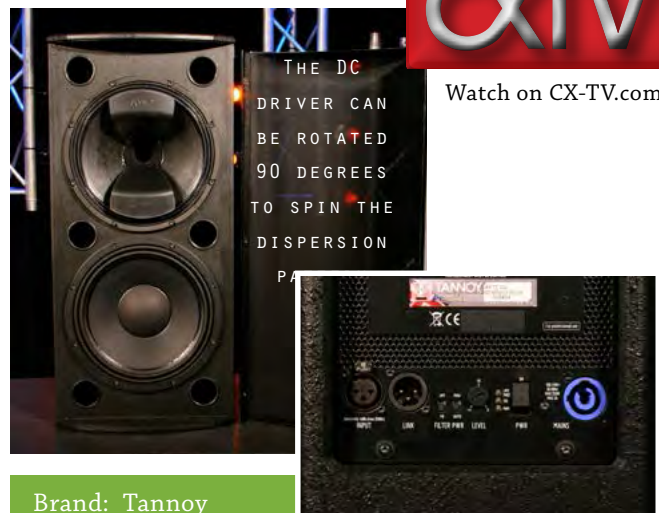
In touring situations, speaker boxes are often cased in pairs to make for efficient truck packing. You could do this with the VXP12.2Q, and so long as the case stayed on its wheels you'd be fine. Lifting such a case would be

a four person job should the need eventuate. There are handles moulded into the end panels, as well as removable plugs which can be replaced with a top-hat for stand mounting. A number of integrated flying points on all sides make it easy to install, though the optional bracket has carried over the clunky feel and look of its predecessors. I think a properly engineered cable solution would look a lot better.

I really like this speaker a lot for specific applications. I wouldn't use it for bumped-in FOH deal – mainly because I don't see pole mounting as practical for a box this heavy. I would happily take it on the road as a touring wedge, knowing it would make my job easier. I would use it by itself as a drumfill box. I would specify it for installation in a venue (especially one with a low ceiling). The mass of fly points, visual appeal and inbuilt power management functions add to the install appeal, lowering the cost of ownership in the long term. Not to mention it sounds awesome.



Watch on CX-TV.com



Brand: Tannoy
 Model: VXP12.2Q
 RRP: \$4899
 Product Info: www.tannoy.com
 Distributor: www.audioproducts.com.au

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Watch on CX-TV.com
 Brand: Rosco
 Model: LitePad Loop Pro Kit
 RRP: \$1250
 Product Info: www.rosco.com
 Distributor: www.rosco.com

By Jimmy Den-Ouden

CX looked at the LitePad range from Rosco some time back, and we were quite impressed. The Loop is the newest member of the family, and it's quite different to its brethren.

Its purpose in life is to attach to the front of a camera – still or video – and provide soft illumination for subjects at close range. The unit supplied to us for review came as part of the full “pro” kit. It all ships inside a nice carry case, with a foam cutout interior machined to hold the various bits of the kit securely in place.

The centerpiece of the kit is the Loop itself, which kind of looks like a big plastic donut – circular with a hole through the middle. There's a magnetic centre ring, which is used to mount various filters to the front of the Loop. On the back is a DC power inlet, power switch, and more magnets that form part of the mounting system.

The LitePad Loop mounts to a metal L bracket,



5800K. Importantly, because it's a gentle lightsource it doesn't immediately cause the subjects pupils to dilate and look weird.

I tried the Loop on a few different cameras – the hole in the centre and the mounting system make it very compatible with lots of cameras both pro video and DSLR. The DSLR movement has gained momentum in recent times, and while it's not a mainstay of



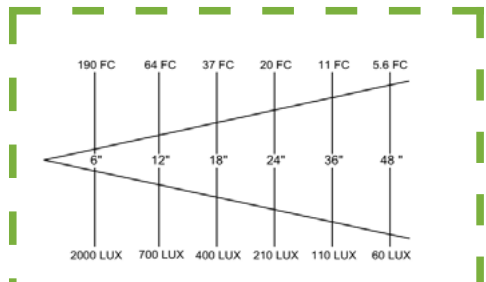
"Le Maiz without LitePad Loop"



"and with LitePad Loop"

which in turn mates with a set of rails, the other end of which is attached to a tripod bracket. Basically you mount the camera to the tripod bracket then attach the whole lot to your tripod. Choose from the long or short rails (the pro kit includes both), and attach these and the L bracket. The Loop then snaps into place and is held there by magnets. In still applications and with some gentle movement it's very solid, though it will let go under sudden violent movement. So don't drop your camera with the unit attached, or if you must, then at least attach a safety wire to the point on the back of the Loop. It weighs a mere 1.1kg. Various power options are included in the kit – an international AC adapter and a battery pack which holds 8x AA batteries. Also included are a dimmer and a bunch of useful filters – everything from CTO to beauty pink and even some diffusers. Dimming the unit the colour temperature remains constant at

live production it does merit a mention. The Indy filmmaker crowd will love the LitePad Loop. The light output is soft and very flat. Some experimentation revealed there is something of a magic distance at which to use it. Too close and you lose focus, too far and you lose too much light. At 6" distance light output is 2000 LUX, and this decreases in a linear manner as you go further away. I shot some product pics with the loop and got great results. Within the right operating range it does exactly what it's supposed to, and does so beautifully. See the comparison photos to get a good understanding of exactly what you can achieve.





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NEWTEK TRICASTER 455

JUST LIKE A TV STUDIO
IN A BOX...

BY JIMMY DEN-ODEN

THE TRICASTER is an interesting machine. It takes the place in studio facilities of other pieces of equipment – in this case quite a lot of other equipment. In a nutshell, it's basically a TV studio control room condensed into a 2RU box, with an external control surface.

The TriCaster 455 is fundamentally a 14 channel vision switcher, of which six inputs can be external sources. The first four inputs are aligned to the physical BNC sockets on the back, and can be fed any signal from composite through to HD-SDI. Each input has its own proc amp, allowing adjustment of image parameters such as brightness, contrast and saturation. There's also a chroma key function on each input, which is very simple to get up and running. We tested the chroma key function in our studio against a blue screen and it works well – clean defined images with very little fiddling required.

The next two inputs are “net” inputs, and these are fed via the Ethernet port on the device. They can show inputs from the TriCaster 3Play replay devices (keeping your video

inputs free for cameras), or you can stream video to them via Airplay on iPhone or iPad (stored content only – the internal cameras on these devices cannot yet be used). A small standalone program called IVGA is stored on the TriCaster, and copying this to a memory stick and running it on an external Mac or PC allows you to port the screen image and sound from that machine directly into the net inputs on the unit. So for instance it's really easy to integrate a Skype call into your source selection.

Dual DDR playback devices are integrated into the

"HANDS ON, WE LIKE THE TRICASTER"



TRICASTER BACK END

system, as is a 4 channel recorder. The native playback format of the device is MPEG2, and it's happy to import a variety of other file types too. It's possible (and indeed quite easy) to work with footage in mixed formats too. You can't run instant replays from the internal recorders, but that doesn't matter. Switching and running replays at the same time would be a bit too much for one person to think about. The TriCaster can record up to 20 hours (in HD) on the removable drive, which can be hot-swapped with another standard 2TB 7200RPM drive when it gets full (just eject the drive through the windows interface before you pull it out). Bouncing out to Windows isn't hard – just quit the TriCaster application. It all comes back wherever you left it last, and multiple configurations can be created and loaded from the splash screen.

There's an on-board still store into which a variety of graphics can be loaded. Dual down stream keyers mean it's easy to overlay graphics onto your video content. The TriCaster 455 includes a load of really nice transition, animation and even full-screen wipe effects. Applying these to transitions is done via a few mouse clicks on the main screen, and the wipes even have sound effects associated with them. If you want an animation effect on your DSK graphics, again it's very easy to browse through options and apply one.

Graphics aren't exactly in short supply either. The TriCaster 455 ships with LiveText 1 software

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included, which allows you to create titles and other text based images. For more advanced editing, LiveText 2 is available separately and this runs on an external PC. DataLink 3 (also available separately) enables the import of live text from RSS/web feeds for news tickers, weather info and such. It all ports straight into the TriCaster 455.

If you've got a doorway, you've got a workout! I question the validity of this claim, but with the TriCaster if you've got a green-screen you've got a set. The box has 24 virtual sets built in, and even lets you generate your own sets using the Virtual Set Editor. Setting up the virtual set is pretty simple too – just choose one, and then pick your foreground images. Presto, your talent is now standing in a virtual space. It even generates reflections on surfaces which move with the talent, and you can inlay other video into virtual on set monitors. Once you've switched into the virtual set, you can choose a variety of different camera angles, and zoom from one to another at adjustable speeds. The movement is smooth and clean, and the virtual sets in general look incredibly convincing.

Maximum frame delay from SDI input to SDI output is 1.5 frames, and while you can mix formats on the SDI and analogue outputs that's not the only way to get video out of the thing. The TriCaster 455 can also stream to a number of web streaming providers, and setting this up involves choosing one, entering a username and password, then clicking "stream". Complicated? Not really.

In the spirit of being everything to everyone, the unit handles a number of different audio sources. A mixture of embedded and analogue audio inputs and outputs can be used, and you can even apply mic pre-amps and +48v to the XLR inputs. Each input has a short-form GEQ and compressor, and overall mix can be managed externally via midi controller. There's AFV capability, and even talk of an iPad app to control the mix.

At its heart, the TriCaster is

IF YOU'VE
GOT A
DOORWAY,
YOU'VE GOT A
WORKOUT!

basically a computer with an external control surface and a lot of video IO. Physically the brain of the TriCaster looks like a computer – DVI, network and USB ports populate the back panel, along with a host of BNC connectors for all things video. XLR and TRS connectors look after analogue audio. Visually it doesn't seem like a lot of IO, but it makes sense when you consider how much of the action happens inside the device, and the fact that the network port handles multiple video streams in and out of the device.

The system operates on a Windows 7 platform, and seems pretty stable to us. A USB keyboard and mouse offer control over the computer side, and indeed you can drive the unit using these. But it's not much fun – hence the dedicated control surface. It's well built, and heavy enough that it won't slide around on the desk even under the most over-enthusiastic operational conditions. The layout of the surface resembles that of a normal vision switcher, with the addition of a few extra functions to operate the DDRs and virtual set zoom positions. The keys feel good and are well backlit – it's a very good control surface and it links to the rack box using just a USB cable.

This means you can mount the processing unit in a machine room and remote the panel to a comfy, quiet control room.

Just having the control panel wouldn't make sense without having some kind of screen. The TriCaster 455 supports up to 2 DVI monitors which show a

AT ITS
HEART, THE
TRICASTER IS
BASICALLY A
COMPUTER.



combination of input, PST, and PGM monitoring along with a virtual simulation of the control interface. The DVI outputs are a bit fussy on resolution, so make sure to pick a decent screen. A number of different layouts can be selected, and within these you can even do some re-sizing functions on the various windows. Better yet, tech monitoring is addressed with the option to call up wave-form monitor and vectorscope.

With such a huge amount of stuff going on it would be easy to build a really difficult user interface to manage it all. Thankfully this is not the case, and everything you see on screen makes sense. Look for the thing you want in the most logical place and chances are that's where you'll find it.

I was really impressed with this unit. It does initially seem kind of pricey, but only until you stop and calculate the cost of doing the same things using discrete components. I calculate the disk recorders alone would cost more than the whole unit. What the TriCaster does is make broadcast quality studio presentation, playout and streaming available to users with minimal budget, equipment space and skills. It's well priced, compact and very easy to operate.



Brand: Newtek
 Model: TriCaster 455
 RRP: \$27,104 inc GST
 Product Info: www.newtek.com
 Distributor: www.adimex.com.au

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ETC SOURCE FOUR

Nouveau classic theatre

By Jimmy Den-Ouden

LED
Engine
Barrel

THE original Source Four has certainly found some acceptance over the years – especially within the theatrical sphere. It was only a matter of time before ETC released a LED source version, and now time has passed and it's here. ETC aren't the first to the post with an LED profile, but the Source Four LED certainly seems to have been worth waiting for. We've gone on and on about the benefits of LED fixtures, so rather than repeat all this let's just take a look at the fixture.

It weighs in at under 9kg with a lens barrel, and physically it looks a lot like a normal Source Four, albeit one with a slightly enlarged undercarriage. This is to accommodate the LED drive circuitry, and a side bonus is that with the shutters closed you can lie the fixture down flat without trashing it. Three models are available including

Tungsten, Daylight, and Lustr+. The first two are pretty self explanatory (white light at 3000K and 5600K respectively), while the third uses the Selador x7 colour mixing system. The x7 system includes white LEDs so the Lustr+ can achieve nice pastel shades as well as bold saturated colour.

We've seen the x7 system previously on the ETC Desire range, and it's not the only thing the Source Four LED has inherited. The lightsource in each of the fixtures is a 60 point source LED module – just like the Desire D60. Difference here is that ETC has squeezed it into a much smaller footprint – maybe half that of the D60. This means some forced cooling is required, and a multi-speed fan takes care of this.

CELED ighting



LED Housing Tube

Various thermal management choices are available in the fixture

menu allowing options from protected mode (for architectural use), right up to boost mode which allows the fans to run faster, hence providing more cooling for the LED. In boost mode the fixture was inaudible to us at 1m.

The Lustr+ uses a mixture of colours spread across this, and indeed without the lens tube attached you can see the individual colours. It's maximum output is around 4000 Lumens, while the Tungsten is brighter, and Daylight brighter again – around 6500 Lumens. Side by side, the tungsten equivalent does look brighter in open white. But once you start comparing a gelled tungsten fixture with a Lustr+ unit, things

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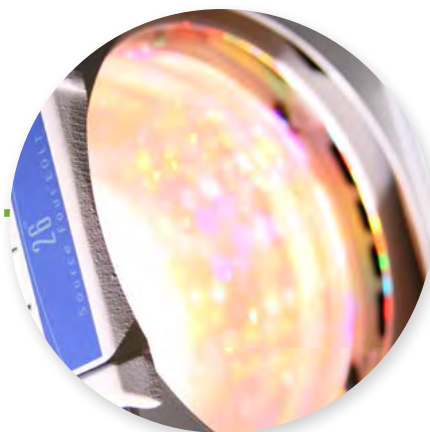
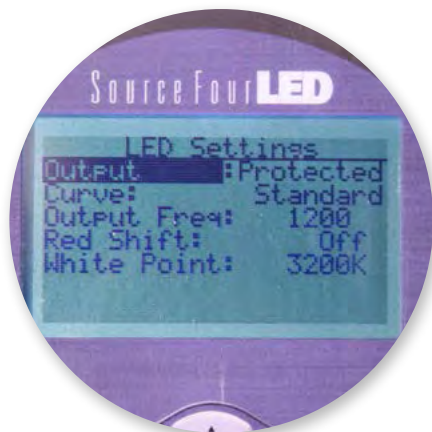
SW8 8-channel Auto-Switcher *For when the show must go on!*

The Radial SW8 auto-switcher provides redundant backup by automatically switching between two 8-channel sources such as a pair of digital recorders. Designed primarily for live concerts and stage shows where backing tracks are used for orchestration, backing chorals and sound effects.

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change. The Lustr+ can produce some colours brighter than its tungsten counterpart.

ETC really has gone to town with the optics on the Source Four LED. The multi-colour LED source is quite obvious without any lensing, but once a barrel is attached and focused, the individual colours combine pretty nicely – especially at distance. For short throw applications, a high efficiency diffuser is included with the fixture, its purpose to clean up colour artifacts before they hit the lens assembly. The result is very clean beam edges with no colour shadows.

While the Source Four LED can be used with existing ETC Source Four lens barrels, the company has a range of EDLT options – enhanced definition lens tubes. These include a 50 degree EDLT model, specific to the Source Four LED. The results using standard lens tubes are good, but for super clean gobo projection and hard-edged beams the EDLT really is the go. Presumably figuring they nailed the control aspect of the Desire range pretty well, ETC has incorporated the same drive electronics and menu system on the Source Four LED range.

This means the dimming is smooth, and for studio applications an adjustable refresh rate means flicker free output. The Source Four LED runs happily in standalone mode, and even without a console you can link several fixtures and propagate settings from any one of them to the others.

X7 COLOUR SYSTEM



50,000 HOUR LIFESPAN ON THE LUXEON LEDs

The red shift function on Lustr+ enables the fixture to add red to the beam as it dims, thus replicating the dimming curve of a tungsten source. What it doesn't replicate is the heat generated – I put a meter across the Lustr+ and couldn't make it pull more than about 950mA. In saturated colours current draw was significantly lower. ETC state up to 9 fixtures can be daisy chained off one line, a process made easier with PowerCon and DMX input and loop throughs.

The Source Four LED operates on the same DMX channels as the Desire D60, so it simplifies fixture library files and such. It doesn't get much easier than this. All this LED leads us to wondering about the next generation of lighties: now we have fixtures you can leave pointed at the floor on full tilt - how long will it be till some young dude (who's only ever used LED gear) tries this with an incandescent and burns a hole through the carpet?

Anyhow, it's not likely to be a problem for the Source Four LED, and with a 50,000 hour lifespan on the Luxeon LEDs nor is ongoing operational cost.



Brand: Source Four CE LED
 Model: Tungsten, Daylight, Lustr+
 RRP: LED Engines starting from \$3200.00 inc GST
 Product Info: www.etcconnect.com
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POWER STAGE EMERGES

FROM THE ASHES OF BANKRUPTCY COMES REDEMPTION

By Julius Grafton



AT PRO STAGE IN ADELAIDE KELVIN HARMAN SPENT THE BETTER PART OF HIS LIFE BUILDING STAGE AND SEATING SYSTEMS UNTIL EVENTUALLY THE BUSINESS WENT BROKE AND WAS SOLD ON. NOW WITH POWER STAGE, KELVIN HAS PUT HIS STAGE AND SEATING DESIGN IDEAS BACK INTO MANUFACTURE.

Kelvin went almost as low as one can go. His business failed with staff thrown out of work and suppliers demanding payment. "I was facing law suits from some suppliers. I was having difficulties with my children because of the breakdown of my marriage. I had no money. I was sleeping in my office". He told CX this not for sympathy but by way of explanation.

Pro Stage had a bad debtor who failed to pay them \$100,000 on a job. "I delivered the equipment and they didn't want to pay. I had 14 people working for me - machinery leases, equipment leases. I was doing deals to shift gear. Pro Stage went into receivership and eventually I was trying to carry the debt. The family house went, the cars went, and the wife went."



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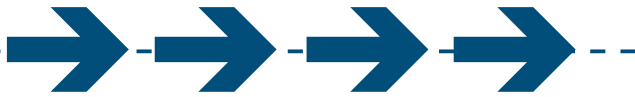
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THE RETURN

“He once said ‘I don’t own anything, but own all my mistakes’”, Linnet told CX.

Eventually he went personally bankrupt. “My family had deserted me. But one morning the key creditor (in the Pro Stage failure) dropped their lawsuit, and a real estate agent called and said I could rent a flat I had applied for. And amazingly I got an email from Linnet, and my daughter decided to live with me! All in one day”

The long road to redemption saw him back in Melbourne, dating his University sweetheart Linnet Hunter, with whom he had reconnected via Facebook in his darkest days.

“I moved to Victoria after I made contact with Linnet. I got a job painting stages at Colac Performing Arts Centre, working as a mechanist for 3 years for \$18 an hour. It was a long cold winter – you make \$350 a week, I couldn’t afford firewood. I’d go home, put a beanie on, and go to bed with a book.”

“I’d run into people like John Wood (actor), or touring managers who knew me from Pro Stage days and they couldn’t believe I was working there as a mech! One guy took his photo with me to put on Facebook, because I was the guy who invented Pro Stage. I’d disappeared, and got sick of telling people the story”.

“Eventually some of the serious people like Tony Millar from Production Works in Tasmania, Col West from Total Events Services in Darwin and Tim Marshman from Black Box Productions in SA started to find out where I was, and asked me to make things for them.”

“With Linnet’s help I converted an old dairy outside Birregurra (2 hours from Melbourne) into a workshop and started to make prototypes. It’s a place I was happy in – I thought, if I’m going to be broke, I’ll be broke in a beautiful part of the country. The fact I’d been contacted by people I realised I had a lot of knowledge so I could invent another staging system that would meet their needs”.

“He once said ‘I don’t own anything, but own all my mistakes’”, Linnet told CX.

“It means I’m not afraid to move forwards because I won’t make the same mistakes. I know what the mistakes and errors were in Pro Stage. I’ve made those mistakes, I own them, and I can see that I won’t go down the same path.”

“To start, I bought the latest auto CAD. Because you’re bankrupt for 3 years you can’t really do anything. So I knew I had time to design. I sat there at night without a TV and did the drawings and tested things on paper”.

“I knew I was never going to be able to weld aluminium, so I talked to the airplane guys, and they showed me the aeronautical rivet and the expensive gun – I’ve put 33,000 rivets in now, there is a counter on the back of the gun! I can make everything myself, instead of buying an expensive machine or paying a welder. I turned that down-time into a positive.”

“To start up I needed 3 new aluminium extrusions, and instead of buying anything for myself, like a car or a surfboard, I bought a riveter. Then a saw.”

“My first product was the Power Stage staging panel (2m x 1m podium stage panel with plug in legs) rated for all Australian Standards at 7.5kPa (Unit weight under 40kg) and Col West ordered 40 of them for the Darwin Festival and he sent a deposit.” The same platform can be used for seating or staging, on different subframes.

“I directed a play for the local amateur theatre group in the shire hall, and I hired some of my old Pro Stage seating from my old clients to show them what was possible – and they were so impressed with the setup the Shire put out a tender to buy some! So I had a sale for a seating system! Which meant I could buy an electronic copy router from Germany. I call him Milton.”

KELVIN@POWERSTAGE.COM.AU

MILTON AND KELVIN

“Before Milton I had a manual copy router, and stood over the product on the bench for hours and hours”.

“I’ve sold product locally and now I’ve come out, so to speak, and shown Power Stage at ENTECH in Melbourne. I’ve ironed out the bugs.”

“It’s just me and Milton, I only need four good customers a year, and eventually I will get my million dollars back. ENTECH was perfect for me - to remake connections.”



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THE LIVE PERFORMANCE AUSTRALIA TICKETING CODE OF PRACTICE

LIVE PERFORMANCE AUSTRALIA (LPA) has developed a voluntary industry code of practice to provide guidance on all matters related to ticketing. The LPA Ticketing Code of Practice is designed to protect consumers in the live performance industry, and to ensure a consistent industry approach to common consumer complaints. This, in turn, promotes consumer confidence in the industry. Compliance with the LPA Ticketing Code of Practice is mandatory for LPA Members, and the Code serves as an example of industry best practice for those who haven't yet joined.

Split into two complementary halves (one labelled "Industry Version" and the other labelled "Consumer Version"), the LPA Ticketing Code outlines the approach that should be taken in the event of cancelled, re-scheduled or re-located shows. In simple terms – these are the most common causes for refunds. The Code also provides extensive guidance on how advance ticket monies should be handled by ticket sellers and promoters, and imposes a requirement for promoters to develop their own consumer complaint handling procedures, and to train staff accordingly.

The Code also operates to inform the public, and provides sound consumer guidance on common terms and conditions of entry - and how terms and conditions of sale relate to tickets, generally.

THE LPA TICKETING CODE OF PRACTICE IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT CONSUMERS IN THE LIVE PERFORMANCE INDUSTRY

Finally, the LPA Ticketing Code of Practice is supported by a secondary complaints handling procedure, where a complaint can be referred to LPA by either the consumer or the LPA Member - if it can't be resolved through the Members own complaints handling procedure first. This service is only available to LPA Members.

The current, fifth, edition of the LPA Ticketing Code came into effect on 1 February 2012 and represents the latest step in an ongoing process of refinement that began in 2001.

The Code is independently reviewed every three years, and continues to evolve with the industry. The latest edition, for example, is the first edition to deal with the issue of online discount ticket service providers, (such as Jumponit.com, Groupon.com, and the like).



LPA TICKETING CODE OF PRACTICE ESTABLISHES THE GOLD STANDARD FOR MANAGING CONSUMER COMPLAINTS IN THE LIVE PERFORMANCE INDUSTRY

And every new edition of the Code is reviewed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) prior to publication.

Simply put, the LPA Ticketing Code of Practice establishes the gold standard for managing consumer complaints in the live performance industry. Because sometimes you need to know what to do, when the show doesn't go on!

If you'd like to know more about the LPA Ticketing Code of Practice, or request a copy of the Code, write to info@liveperformance.com.au or check out the LPA web-site at www.liveperformance.com.au



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BIZ TALK

WE PAY QUICKLY...THEY REFUND SLOWLY

By Julius Grafton

NEVER have I been more certain that the global airline system is headed into a permanent bust cycle. Several years back, CX had to drag United Airlines Corp of Illinois USA to the NSW Consumer Claims Tribunal, to get a fully refundable airfare actually refunded. From cancellation to refund was around 14 months. In all they had the actual money for almost 2 years.

Sure they had a complication with our credit card being cancelled in the meantime, but they were inflexible and indeed you could only communicate with them via a dreadful call centre, somewhere muddy and muffled. Where the evidentially sincere foot soldiers could only make promises they could not know would be kept. Just like Testra's call centre slaves, for whom we feel eternally sorry and angry at the same time.

Recently Malaysian Airlines also pulled the tricky one on us. The call centre (see above) were slow and dopey and said they had cancelled the trip. It was refundable after a \$120 fee - which we agreed was reasonable. But to get the refund, we would need to 'go to our ticket office in Sydney'.

This turned out to be on the third level at the International Terminal, where one guy laboriously handled a line of punters changing dates and tickets. Once he got to CX, he explained it would be four to six weeks before the refund. At least we got a printed receipt, although there is no actual sum of money written on there.

Worse still, the clerk at Sydney insisted the call centre had NOT cancelled the flight. So if we had left it until AFTER the flight date, we would have been screwed due

to the ticket conditions. So when they say 'yes sir, job done', you have no evidence of anything. Think Telstra - and memo Telstra P.R., don't bother calling us, just get your systems right for next time. How about the 'Rebate Voucher' scam as in 'retail price \$499 after cashback'. You pay \$599, and send the receipt and the voucher off to some third line marketing shop. I swear we didn't get at least two rebates after

No This Story Is About Equity - You Pay, You Cancel, You Meet The Conditions, They Should Refund Promptly.

we mailed the receipt from a major retailer to the agent entity representing the brand. We decided they are intentionally underpaying in the knowledge most people won't follow up. There are now two well known electronic brands on our 'do not buy' list as a result. They hang conditions on this. Like you have only 30 days from purchase, you must enclose the ORIGINAL receipt, and fill out the

flipping voucher correctly.

Right oh, what about the Gift Voucher? You pay \$100 over the counter, get the voucher, and hey - written on the back it is only current for 12 months! Hello? A \$100 banknote remains current forever, right? So why is the 'gift' voucher expiring? Hey we figured it out - this is a 'gift' to the retailer! Remember when Borders went into the insolvency merry-go-round, and they decided not to honour the vouchers? People rocked up to the register, and the poor sales clerk had to explain the nasty receiver had directed them to not honour the vouchers!

The no-refund sign at the retail store, by the way, is probably voided by the Trade Practices Act. But this isn't a story about that.

No this story is about equity - you pay, you cancel, you



meet the conditions, they should refund promptly. hotels.com have been very good so far for CX on this one. Sad we can't mention anyone else, off the top of the article.

Oh yes, another Telstra story. Dad-in-law called off his home phone account a year back, because he and we were fed up with everything. Especially the call centre. They'd overcharged him over \$1000, it transpired. After much silly call centre talk to many silly places, Telstra credited his new iiNet account instead of refunding the money. Which works, but it was an enormous hassle, which further estranged everyone in our orbit.

Finally, we know we are supposed to be looking for a \$500 refund into the CX main bank account from somewhere for something a few months ago. But we don't have a 'refund alert system', so we can't remember from whom or why. Our Xero accounting package does not do this, nor do any others we know of. Chances are most of us are just like CX. And the ratbag suppliers and airlines know it.

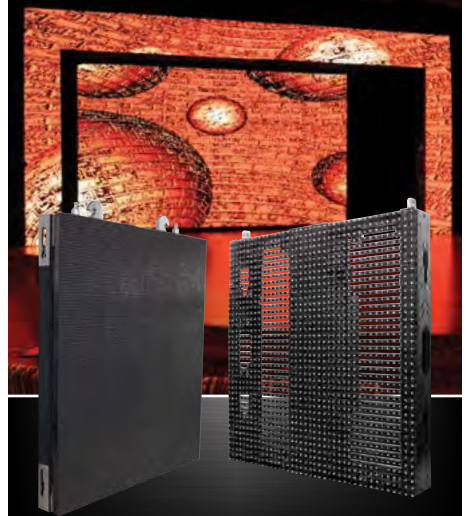
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Replacement for C Tick announced - launch date now pushed back to 1 March 2013

The ACMA has recently written announcing the replacement labelling regimes for C Tick and A Tick.

This has been under consultation for the last couple of years and the initial expectation was that the new regime would commence on July 1st 2012 - ie. at the beginning of last month. Clearly that hasn't happened but the recent communication from the ACMA did lay out a new timetable and clarify a couple of further points.

Here is the key information:

- The new changeover date is 1 March 2013
- From that date A Tick, C Tick and RCM will be consolidated into one single compliance mark: RCM
- The ACMA supplier code number database will be 'deactivated' and suppliers will need to register on a new online database.
- You will no longer need to include supplier identification on the gear labelled with RCM - there will no longer be supplier code numbers.
- Testing and record keeping will remain as it currently is though a new database will be introduced where these records will be kept.

Up to this point, notwithstanding the delay in implementation, ACETA is happy that the ACMA has listened to our strong recommendation that the transition period be extended to three years has been adopted. This means products which currently have a C Tick label on them do not need to be rebadged unless they are still on the market on 29 February 2016.

This was a win and a big one. But we are urgently seeking advice about a number of other related matters. These

include advice on:

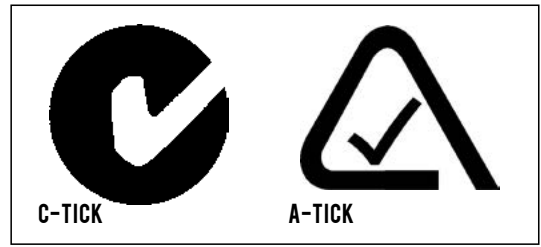
- When the new RCM label can start to be used. For example, if you launch a new product in say January 2013 which will have a life span of more than three years can you launch it with the RCM label already on it. It seems foolish to badge with the old label and then have to rebadge with the new label at some point thereafter. Indications are that the ability to apply just the RCM code on new release products could be available as early as the fourth quarter 2012. The ACMA has said they can't advise on this until around October, so we are staying in contact with them.
- If there are no supplier code numbers any more how does the ACMA know who imported any given individual product and how can they ensure that each importer, if there is more than one, is undertaking the appropriate testing and keeping the appropriate paperwork? Who pays for the testing?

This last point is critical. In this world of borderless trading, products can be imported to Australia through the authorised distributor, a parallel importer or directly by the customer. That's the new world we live in and, like it or not, as an industry we recognise that's the world we now have to compete in. And it's important that the ACMA recognises this. It's unfair to expect the authorised distributor to wear the costs in both testing and bureaucracy to comply with RCM (and the new Electrical and Electronic Safety Standards regime which will be included in the legislation enabling RCM) whilst letting the parallel importer avoid them. This gives the parallel importer the option of either a price advantage or making more profit on the back of

another company's investment in compliance. Unless we're missing something here that seems quite unfair.

For some time there has been the suspicion that the ACMA wasn't prepared to police C Tick and, on the face of it, this new regime looks to put some substance to that rumour. If there are no individual supplier numbers how will the new regime be enforced? It will be impossible to know who has brought a product into the country. If Government believes there is a need to legislate to protect consumers and requires industry compliance then it also must be prepared to act against those who choose, either for commercial benefit or as a result of ignorance, to stand outside that regulatory frame work. It is a reasonable expectation of those who choose to conform and it is simply unfair to industry to do otherwise.

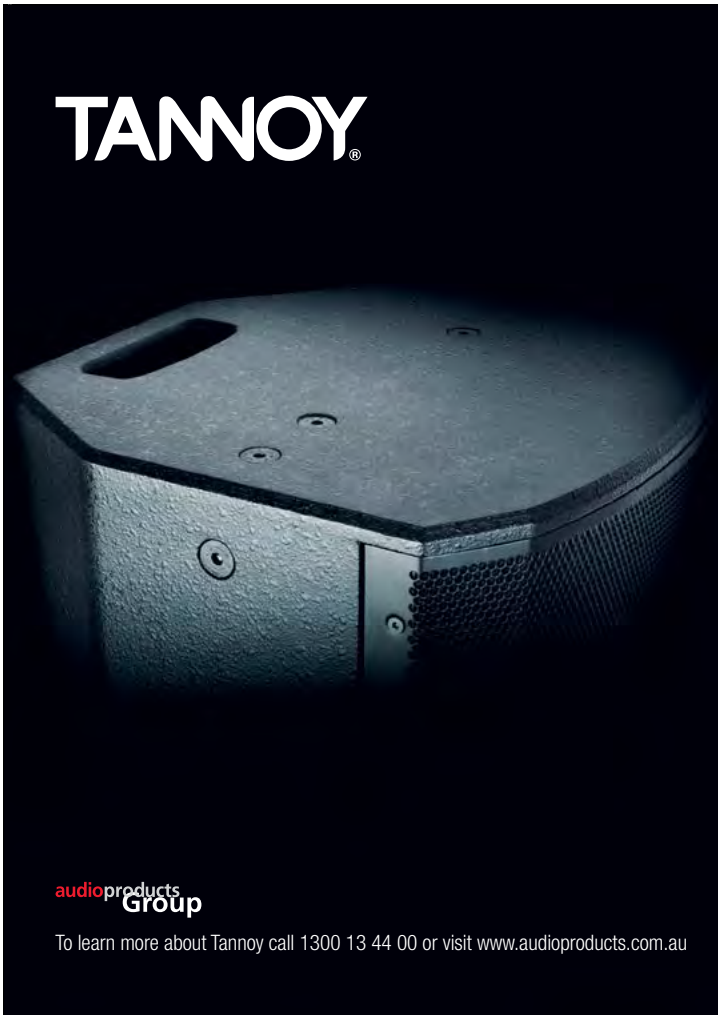
At this point in time we see no evidence of any greater intention from the ACMA, as the responsible authority, to actively pursue non compliance under this new regime than it does under the current arrangements, where for example products are known to have been sold into the market by one supplier using the 'borrowed' supplier code of another and therefore not providing the testing evidence required on the basis that the product has already



been deemed compliant. It would seem that the ACMA's only interest is in ensuring that a product is compliant. They are not interested in who wears the cost of achieving that compliance, either because they don't understand business or don't understand borderless trading.

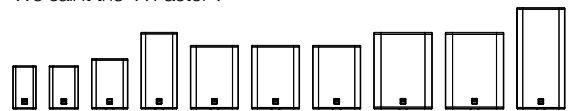
The bottom line on this is that if the EESS and RCM regimes are required so that consumers are protected then it is an equal requirement that the regime is enforced, and is supported by a process that enables that.

ACETA will soon be taking the issue of enforcement up directly with the ACMA, the responsible ministers and others to restore some basic fairness into the proposed new system. So watch this space.



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PART 1 – EMPLOYEES

BY PAUL MATTHEWS

AFTER singing along with the radio in the van alone for a while, sooner or later we all come to find that there's a lot of jobs that can't be done with just one pair of hands. When we do, we stare across a dangerous cavern. We're no longer "self employed". We're now an "employer" (or "Boss", in Oz Speak).

The most challenging and frustrating thing any small business owner will ever have to handle on a daily basis is it's humans. Finding them, trusting them, keeping them, paying them, training them, replacing them, getting rid of them. It makes accounts, estimating and purchasing seem like child's play in comparison.

Right away we need to consider whether we need an "employee" or a "contractor". Some installers start out by using short term hired guns on invoiced hourly rates. It all works fine at first, but then blows up in their face when their "gun" isn't in it's holster when they need it most. The natural reaction is then to go the other way and declare they will never hire casuals again and swear that in future, their business will be strictly "employees only".

The reality is that a small, profitable PA installer business will always need both trained, reliable permanent staff AND trusted "on call" casuals on its books. That's because our work flow is at the mercy of customers' schedules – not ours. One month we're mopping up small jobs around town in the van. The next, we're on a major site installing and commissioning a \$30k system, chasing an opening deadline, surrounded by a flurry of

other tradies all hell bent that their job is more important than yours. For example. Here at PA Matthews Audio most of our work is in the education sector. This means we face periods of slow, steady small jobs (ideally suited to employees) during school terms. These are punctuated by occasional huge bursts of installation activity at major school sites during term breaks. The only way we can meet these work flows is by employing a few well trained

The next, we're on a major site installing and commissioning a \$30k system, chasing an opening deadline, surrounded by a flurry of other tradies all hell bent that their job is more important than yours.

permanent staff and then double this work force during busy periods by adding contractors and casuals. Most other installers will face similar challenges, particularly whenever that awful word "opening deadline" is whispered.

The best advantage of mixing staff and casuals is that we can leave the "hired guns" under the general supervision of our permanents. That way we still ensure a level of work consistency and at the same time speed the job up well beyond the capacity of using just our employees alone. The key to consistency and safety is aiming for a 1:1 ratio of permanent vs casual during these busy times. The permanents "know

the way our company does things" while the casuals relieve them of some of the more mundane and repetitive tasks during busy spells.

Finding them. Hmm. It's not like buying stuff. There's no catalogue. No agent that comes to your door and tries to sell you a particular worker. We just have to get out there and find them somehow. The quality of workers we end up with kind of depends on where we prefer to look and to a lesser extent, how much we are willing to pay.

Contrary to popular belief, when it comes to employees - money isn't everything! That's because in Australia our awards system means that for a given skill of trade worker, the pay scales are all very similar. If you're an installer then the Modern Award you'll be looking at is invariably MA000025 – the Australian Electrical, Electronic and Communications Contracting Award. This 2010 concoction bought together five different state awards. A real dog's breakfast, which isn't all that bad.. until you get to the bits that talk about apprentices! Small wonder there are so few new entrants to this industry.

While MA000025 deals mainly with licensed electricians, for PA installation work there are no real recognised qualifications which a worker must hold in order to carry out their task. That opens up opportunities for us to attract people who enjoy pulling cables and twisting wires together but otherwise have little or no interest in traditional electrical or communications installation work on dirty building sites populated by



(shall we say) “less inviting” work colleagues.

Whilst having licensed sparkies on staff is definitely a benefit and is highly recommended, the majority of workers who will fall into your lap as potential employees (and particularly, casuals) will enter into the broad category of “unlicensed electrician”. Someone who has plenty of experience but for one reason or another has either failed to qualify for a licence, hasn’t been bothered to try for one, or has overseas qualifications not recognised here.

If we want to attract the best employees at this level, the best way to do it is to consider what your business has to offer in terms of things like travelling between work and home, civilised start and finish times, the work environment, interesting tasks and training opportunities.

Training doesn’t necessarily have to mean TAFE or recognised courses. For PA, it could be nothing more than a focused “in house” training scheme which leaves the employee with the skills they’re personally looking for to do their job competently.

Where to start looking? Well, we’re going to be limited to either getting a kid fresh from school (with no baggage but generally lots of attitude) or a so called “mature age” worker - someone who is going to be a bit more stable but bring with them baggage from their previous job(s). We can split this latter category again – into someone who either still works for someone else (i.e. we are head hunting them) or someone who’s currently unemployed (the potential reason for which may not become apparent to us until long after we’ve hired them!).

There’s pros and cons either way. Keeping an open mind is essential for anyone who aims to grow their business without leaving you wounded, sore and bleeding in the gutter of modern industrial relations legislation. Thankfully MA000025 does have provision to lay off a worker (without reason) who “isn’t working out” any time up to 12 months from when we first hire them. Pity the employer that decides to try and get rid of someone they’re not happy with after this crucial date passes.

Next month we’ll delve deeper into the challenge of finding employees, training them, working out ways to keep the good ones and considering methods we might use to divulge our business of other ones who may be holding us back.

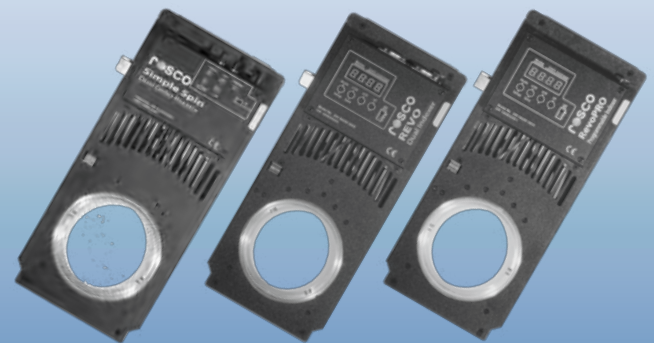
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GOOD MUSIC IN NEW YORK

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THERE'S lots of music in New York, friends told me. You'll love it.

Well yes there is a lot of music there, but I suspect that if you're not a fan of jazz, then your options are somewhat limited. There is a lot of indie music out in the boroughs, like Brooklyn, Queens and New Jersey, but if you want to stay on Manhattan then there's lots of jazz. And, well, not to put too fine a point on it, I hate jazz. I was once taken on a date to Bennett's Lane jazz club in Melbourne, against my better judgment. Lordy. It was so cliché I thought I had been transported back to the early 60s in Soho, London. All that was missing was the cigar smoke and the berets; but there were wispy beards and turtle neck jumpers galore! Four tunes over a two hour period; endless self indulgent solos from each band member, and an audience gazing in rapt attention at these four bearded wankers, who turned out to be their music teachers! Perhaps attendance at the gig was compulsory if you wanted to get a passing grade!

It was a long time since I had needed one of those so I pulled the plug on the date and left.

Anyway, to return to the present day, my GF and I were walking back down Broadway one afternoon and we spotted a shopfront bar called Toshi's Living Room, where the manageress promised us there would be a 5-piece band not playing jazz there that night from 9 o'clock onwards. It was a very expensively decorated place, with a long curving bar down one side and a huge cylindrical aquarium that went from the floor up to and through the ceiling! Awesome.

The stage was about the size of one of Jands' old monitor desks – the Howard's Half-Acre models. Quite where a five piece band would setup was a mystery I was determined to solve. And looking at the traffic in and around Broadway, I also wondered where the band might park and get their gear out. I know New Yorkers travel everywhere on the Subway, but that has its limitations when it comes to carting around a drumkit, a couple of guitars and amps and a Hammond B3 with Leslie box!

So, at the appointed hour we arrived, got a table and a very comfy couch down the front, ordered a bottle of champagne and some food, and sat and waited for something to happen.

After half an hour, our drinks arrived, but no



And very good desks they were, too. I used one for many years, and apart from its size it was very popular with the bands, except when they had to carry it in its road case!

IF IT'S NOT JAZZ YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, THEN YOU'RE STUFFED!

food and no band.

Then a guy wandered in with a briefcase and a roadcase, and another came in with a keyboard and an amp, and started to unpack and setup. The manageress told us the previous band had not turned up but these two had come down at

short notice to play. And also that she was sorry our food hadn't turned up yet but they were 'a bit backed up' in the kitchen.

Looking around the room, it was hard to see what was causing the backup as no-one else - apart from us - seemed to have ordered or be waiting for food, but who knows? Maybe the chef was one of the band members and hadn't turned up either.

One of the two-man trio was a guy called Ben Simons playing a keyboard and singing, and a percussionist called Ryan playing what appeared to be a wooden fruit box, but turned out to be a Cajon, with maraca's tucked into his shoes. And, 'surprise surprise', as Gomer Pyle would say, they were very good. Ryan got an amazing amount of drum sounds out of the Cajon, and Ben had a great voice and could actually play keyboard really well. It was pretty relaxed and laid back, so the compact 12" and horn boxes and the little Allen&Heath Zed10 mixing desk that

comprised the house system coped pretty well. (Nice plug for you there Russo – remember that when I'm looking for something!)

The bar manager was also the sound guy, but as luck would have it I was forced to step in and help out when it became obvious he didn't know a mixer from a margarita. Our food arrived about halfway through the last set, and chock full of Caesar salad and a delicious New York serve of chicken and fries, we grabbed an electric cab (a Prius; eerily quiet) and headed off back to our hotel.

The next night I was still on the hunt for some real music, and we decided to head off to SoHo (South of Houston Street) and another club (the name of which eludes me), which, a phone call had confirmed, served alcohol and live music. My favourite combination, although when we arrived there, 'live' was not the adjective I would have chosen for the venue.

A small two storey shopfront housed a sleepy little folk joint. So we grabbed a couple of drinks and wandered around. Whoa - even more musical clichés. Behind a curtain

towards the rear of the club was a small area with seats and a few people sitting around listening to a girl with long dark hair perched on a stool and strumming a guitar, singing mournful songs. Think Suzanne Vega on downers! A few minutes of this and I was ready to slash my wrists in the toilet. That is, if I could have found it somewhere down in the basement.

“Any bands on tonight?” I asked the barman. “There’s a band just starting upstairs right now,” he replied, pointing to the worn staircase that ran up the wall opposite the bar.

Taking our courage in both hands we carefully made our way up the staircase, fearful that a missed step might send us both plunging into the basement toilet - making slashing my wrists a tad redundant.

Upstairs appeared to have been furnished by simply following furniture removal vans down the road and picking up anything that fell out. We collapsed into a couch that was obviously depriving a street person of somewhere to sleep, and realised that the term ‘band’ was being used in the loosest possible way. We watched as a guitarist, another long-haired girl and a banjo player gathered as far away as they could from a single microphone and started to sing and play to each other. Not us! And nowhere near the microphone, either, making it very hard to hear any words, just rhythm guitar and some banjo plunking. After two or three songs and a polite smattering of applause from an audience comprised of other ‘bands’ waiting to play (and us), the banjo player announced that: “This is the first time we’ve played together.” No shit! Who’d a thought it? They played a couple more songs, and to be honest, individually they weren’t bad; just not ready for playing in front of an audience.

The girl finally realised what a microphone was for, and after the last song leaned towards it saying “Thanks for coming along – we’re called Free Advice – see you next time.”

Free Advice! Never was there a more appropriate band name, and you may be surprised to learn that I had plenty of free advice to give them! The only two pieces suitable for a family magazine, though, were (1) sing into the microphone, and (2) quit now!

We had to roll over in a kind of Fosbury Flop to escape the grip of the couch, and went outside to recover from the earnestness and get some fresh air.

Having had enough excitement for one night, but still hungry, we wandered over to the Papaya Dog, a hot dog bar that sold me two Chilli Dogs and a coconut papaya drink for the bargain price of four dollars. The only trouble occurred when my GF thought that one of the Chilli Dogs was for her. Sadly for her it wasn’t!



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