

CX

MONTHLY TECH NEWS

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CX86, OCTOBER 2013 \$5.50

ROBE Turns 20

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INTEGRATE 2013

Here we are again

GEARBOX REVIEWS:

- Sennheiser LSP-500
- Martin Rush Strobe 1 5x5
- Shure GLX-D, Digital Wireless
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- Gefen Digital Signage Player with WiFi

CX NEWS:

- Sennheiser Australia acquires Syntec
- KV2 and ETA merge
- AMAC returns
- Truckers unite
- Vale Dolby Pioneer Ray Dolby

ONLINE EDITION

The Immortal Michael Jackson Cirque Du Soleil Tour

Sydney Fringe Festival Dance with De Vil

Concert AV Talking Big Business

Road Skills Bernard Fanning, Backstreet Boys FBI Radio

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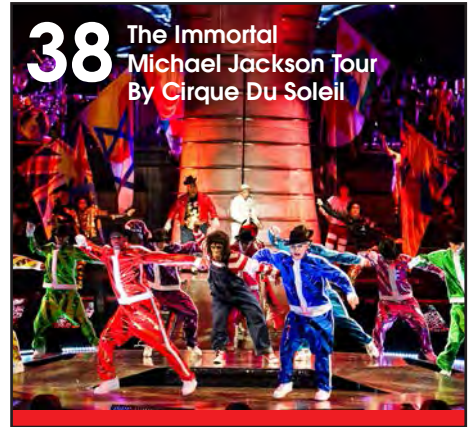
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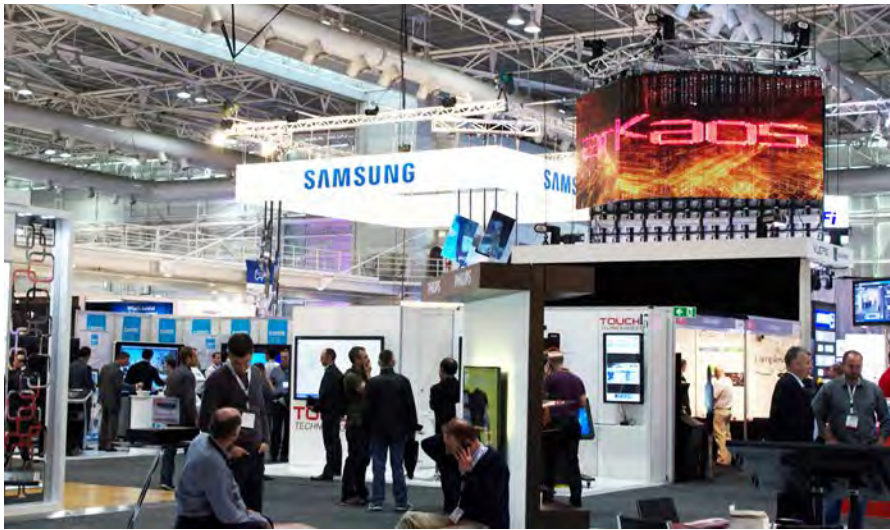


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GUEST EDITORIAL BY JASON ALLEN



I travelled up to Sydney for Integrate last month. I also travelled up to Sydney for ENTECH/SMPTE the month before. All three shows were engaging, relatively well attended and interesting to be at. But returning to the same hall in the SCEC the second time and seeing most of the same people again gave me déjà vu and started making me resentful.

As well as my role at CX I'm a freelance writer and content creator. As a sole trader and one-man-band, how I work and earn isn't that different to a lot of techs or other specialists in our field. As I'm the only person that works in my business, two days out of my schedule two months running had a serious effect on my month. Then I got to thinking how this effect scales up.

Let's say a full day of my work as a freelancer is worth \$800 inc GST. Some companies charge out techs at \$1,000, some less. So let's go with \$800 as a median. Integrate 2013 claims 4800 unique visitors came to the show and ENTECH 2013 4,705. If you assume that each attendee spent just one work day at the show (and many would have spent more), that means Integrate cost us at least \$3,840,000 and ENTECH \$3,764,000. SMPTE, with 8,500, cost a whopping \$6,800,000

Add it all up and you get \$14,404,000. And that's a low ball figure. I realise that the productivity gains from relationships, deals and new knowledge from the shows offsets this figure, but I think that my conservative estimate more than takes that into account.

Now just imagine one show, with every sector of the industry there at the same time, once a year. It'd be time and money efficient and would cause lots of happy cross-pollination of products and knowledge. Most importantly, it would be one hell of a party. Let's make it happen.

- Jason

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NEWS

CX INDUSTRY NEWS



Sennheiser Australia detail plans Syntec acquired by world's largest audio brand

Following the acquisition of distribution firm Syntec International, Sennheiser president of global sales Paul Whiting briefed CX on the transition.

Sennheiser Australia is the latest subsidiary for Sennheiser, formed after they purchased local distributor Syntec from the Sloss family early in September. With 18 Sennheiser subsidiaries around the world, sales grow significantly once the firm opens in a market, he says.

"I personally was involved in the UK subsidiary, we did 3 million pounds in 1990, now we are approaching 50 million in 2013. It allows a more focussed approach, we get closer to the customers. Subsidiaries represent 90% of our business", said Paul Whiting.

Sennheiser is a private company run by the third generation of Sennheiser; two brothers have recently taken control of the company.

The change doesn't affect pricing, despite dealing with headquarters. A new general manager arrives this month, Bjørn Rennemo Henriksen was formerly sales and marketing director of Sennheiser Nordic.



Sennheiser Global's
Paul Whiting

Sennheiser Australia's
New General Manager
**Bjørn Rennemo
Henriksen**



KV2 Audio Asia Pacific joins forces with ETA SGM and KV2 now from one distributor

Newly formed company, Entertainment Technology Australia announces that KV2 Audio Distributor, Dave Williams will join forces. Williams who has been distributing KV2 in Australia for the last decade said that he saw a number of advantages in bringing the KV2 brand under the ETA marketing umbrella.

"While KV2 Asia Pacific will continue to control and handle all of the logistics in respect to the supply and support of KV2 products here in Australia I look forward to further growing the brand with the assistance of ETA", commented Williams. "Dave Croxton has a strong track record in the Pro Audio Distribution business here in Australia and with his marketing finesse and insight to the industry now channeled into ETA I am sure it will help grow brand recognition of KV2 here in Australia. Extra resources in terms of people on the ground will assist in getting KV2 products in front of more clients along with SGM Lighting and other brands ETA will soon be releasing details on."



Dave Williams & Dave Croxton join forces

Dave Croxton has ongoing involvement with KV2 as Director of Sales and Marketing.



Music Association Rebuilds AMAC returns and so do the retailers

Since 1999 the music trade has gathered on the Gold Coast to see new products and network. Music retailers and distributors valued the event, which grew a little unwieldy from its origins at Jupiters Casino by moving into the Convention Centre.

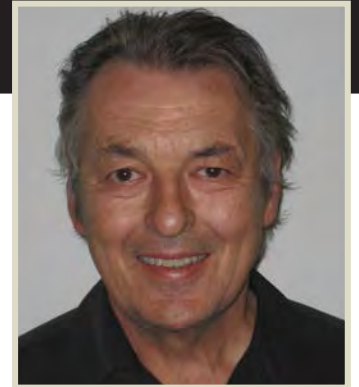
Now the convention and trade show, called AMAC has returned to Jupiters, held in August in a new tighter two day trade show format.

Rob Walker, Executive Director of the Australian Music Association told **CX** the event was last held as a trade and public show in Melbourne in 2010, and it was less than successful which caused a review and a return to grass roots.

“The (Australian Music) Association scaled the event back to suit the times. The retailers understand the concept; they can come and do business with suppliers, have training and a bit of social. This year seemed to achieve that, a smaller show than in the mid 2000’s – but the retailers came, the exhibitors who chose to use the show for their face-to-face marketing were really pleased.”

“We have some rebuilding to do with membership, and we have benefits for retailers like keen banking rates and insurance with tangible savings. The reestablishment of our annual convention is a positive start. The Association has always been there when issues need to be tackled. We’re working on an agenda that includes government relations and improving communications. Supporting AWAG’s efforts and railing for GST on imports for example.”

“We’ve also restructured Weekend Warriors to make it easier for independent stores to access the program. AMA



Rob Walker
Executive Director
of the Australian
Music Association

will do central admin and promotion to take pressure off the retailers so they can focus on recruiting and the concert.”

“We want to take advantage of the long standing AMA website to promote our members and their products to the end user, and generally improve our online presence and communications capacity”. We have a new committee and Tony Burn from The Resource Corporation is the new president”

The AMA started 38 years ago as the Australian Music Trades Association. Prior to that bigger retailers did a lot of importing, then the wholesale distributor structure emerged.

Rob says there are at least 400 music retailers around the country, a number that has contracted somewhat due to closures in recent years and depending on what you define as a music retailer.

“No doubt internet trading is having an impact on margins and the way people shop and the competition on pricing. Retailers are improving their digital footprint and working hard to draw people to their stores. The need to play music hasn’t diminished in any way. The demand is still there, it’s just that the consumer has more options of how and where to buy”, he told **CX**.



Truckers United ATS and AEL combine

Australian Touring Services (ATS) have merged with Australian Entertainment Logistics (AEL), to strengthen their national entertainment and events logistics business.

Chris Woods and Glen Hubbert from AEL will return to ATS where they previously worked, bringing with them a fleet of pantechs and a client base to join with the large ATS fleet.

ATS Director Phil Duncan welcomed the merger. “It’s great to have the boys back, and to grow our business together”.

“ATS directors Chris Nicholson and David Gibson look forward to strengthening our dominant position in this specialised road and freight logistics business”.

The combined firm now boasts over 20 prime movers and 60 trailers.





Integrate Announce Dates Sensible Venue choice for Sydney

Integrate Expo will return next August 26 through to August 28th, at Sydney Showground in Sydney Olympic Park at Homebush. This is Sydney's second trade show venue, and once the Darling Harbour venue is demolished will become the primary location for shows in Sydney.

At presstime a 'temporary' exhibition complex was under

construction at Glebe Island, a disused wharf with terrible road access and no scheduled public transport. Glebe Island Expo will be the location for the next SMPTE and ENTECH trade shows in Sydney in 2015.

Integrate is the only annual tradeshow for audio visual, and now caters to a tighter demographic of installers and integrators across commercial and high end residential.

Curtain Calls



Malcolm Leech died in September from cancer at age 57.

Malcolm was one of the industry's stalwarts. As a stage manager, company manager, programming and venue manager, he strode Australian theatre stages with good humour, finesse, a sense of joy, fun and great purpose.

In 1999 Malcolm returned to Sydney to take up the position of inaugural Director of the City Recital Hall Angel Place, where he steered the project to opening and started the venue on its journey to becoming a vibrant and vital part of the Sydney arts scene.

Throughout his career Malcolm was a great contributor to the broader community. He fulfilled voluntary positions on Arts Peak Bodies, advocated strongly for HIV/AIDS support groups and Positive Living and was a member of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival committee and an inaugural board director of CarriageWorks.

Malcolm was well loved by all who knew him in our industry and will be greatly missed.

David Penfold passed away aged 69 in September.

He was a true man of the theatre; in fact there are few facets of the business that he did not tackle in his long and colourful career.

In the early 1970s he formed a long collaboration with David Mitchell, and together they created the glamorous revues that were a feature of Capriccio's nightclub in Sydney. In 1979 he conceived and co-wrote a new show for the legendary British drag star Danny La Rue.

David was associate producer of Gordon-Frost's Big River, and worked on several other major John Frost presentations.

David was also deeply involved in the restoration and re-positioning in the venue market of the State Theatre, Sydney, the St James Theatre in Wellington, New Zealand, and Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, for which Mike Walsh appointed him inaugural General Manager. Later he served as General Manager for Sydney entrepreneurs Showtune Productions.

David Penfold was a highly respected member of our industry and will be greatly missed.

News Briefs



Sydney's SOS Communication boss Michael White recently celebrated his 70th birthday at a surprise lunch.

'Don't put my photo in your magazine', he said while holding the cake knife. We wouldn't dream of it, Michael!



Michael White

Audio pioneer Ray Dolby has died aged 80.

Dolby Laboratories developed Cinema Audio and Imaging Technologies, and operate a large research and development division in Sydney.



Ray Dolby

Short Technical Courses in January



Juliusmedia and The Concourse (Chatswood) have partnered to deliver short sharp technical training courses within Sydney's newest performing arts centre. These new CONCOURSES draw from a decade of training experience at Juliusmedia and take advantage of the latest technical equipment installed at Concourse. Concourses are for people interested in developing skills for live production in theatre and venues.

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With Anya, you never have a reflection from a large wall because she makes it as if there are no walls. There is no ceiling, no roof, no nearby houses. With in-situ refinements, there are no balcony faces.

Nor are there any cheap seats. Anya so precisely crafts performance that virtually every location receives powerful, full frequency response. Sculpt the sound beam to reach the top of the farthest balcony, but not the wall just above it. Anya lets you be that exact.

Yet for all her capabilities, Anya is simple and intuitive. No complicated array angle, no addressing individual loudspeakers. Just tell Anya where you want the sound; she'll do the rest.

With the room eliminated, all that remains is a defined coverage area where the people that bought the tickets will experience what they came to experience – the artist.



EDITED BY JASON ALLEN

Mackie, a brand that has had its ups and downs over the last few years, is undergoing a renaissance. A raft of new product offerings to its traditional professional customer base, including its eye-catching DL Series digital mixers, is putting the marque back in the hands of the working engineer.

The Integrate 2013 tradeshow at Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre saw Mackie's Australian distributor CMI launch not one but three new lines of product aimed squarely at the commercial market. Rohan Smith, Director of Sales for Loud Technologies' Music Gear Group (Asia & Pacific-Rim) was on hand on the show floor to unveil the new offerings in a well-catered and fun ceremony. The blacks that were covering the new arrivals through the first day of the show were sequentially removed at 4 PM to the thunderous sounds of "Also Sprach Zarathustra", played via iPad through a Mackie DL digital mixer, of course. After the big reveal, we got up close and personal with.....



3204VLZ4

VLZ4 Mixers

Mackie's VLZ Series of compact analogue mixers have been a reliable mainstay in the range for 25 years. At home in any install or corporate gig, the new line now feature Mackie's acclaimed Onyx preamps on every model. The eight new VLZ4 mixers directly replace the previous VLZ3 generation and include models ranging from the desktop 402VLZ4 to a choice of 4-bus effects mixers for touring live sound work.



CMI's Mark Wayne



402VLZ4

new gear profile new gear profile

New knobs and fader caps sit against a cockpit-inspired work surface with a black powder-coat finish providing the contrast needed for easy control identification in low light. Custom op-amps and class-leading negative summing bus architecture ensure that the mixers have the highest headroom and lowest noise possible. Mackie are particularly proud of their rugged construction, with solid steel wraparound chassis and grime-resistant sealed rotary pots.

"From beer spills to drops from moving vehicles...we've seen it all," said Matt Redmon, Mackie's US Product Manager. "We have literally run them over with a truck and they still passed signal. The rugged design of VLZ4 is unique in the industry and it always amazes us to hear user stories revealing what they are capable of handling."

SRM Active Loudspeakers

The SRM Series have been a huge seller for Mackie over the years, making them one of the market leaders in powered speakers. They've now extended the range with three new all-wood, 1600W models: the 12" SRM550, 15" SRM650 and the SRM1850 18" powered subwoofer.

The new SRMs features Mackie High Definition Audio Processing including patented acoustic correction DSP and system optimisation tools like application-specific speaker modes and a feedback destroyer. They also include an integrated 2-channel mixer with Mackie Wide-Z inputs for any extra mic or line sources.

MRmk3 Studio Monitors

The MRmk3 line not only fully replaces the previous generation of monitors with the MR5mk3 and MR8mk3, but expands the range with the 6.5" MR6mk3 full-range monitor and MR10Smk3 studio subwoofer. MRmk3 monitors are acoustically optimised at all stages to enhance the mixing, monitoring and multimedia experience in any home or project studio. A newly-designed minimum-diffraction waveguide provides seamless transition from highs to lows and creates a wider sweet spot. The power amplifiers and transducers are custom-matched for increased performance. All MRmk3 cabinets are rear ported, providing added punch and bass extension and packed with acoustic absorption material for the tight sound you expect from a professional studio monitor.

The MRmk3 Series also includes the MR10Smk3 Powered Subwoofer, providing the deep low end needed for genres like hip-hop and EDM. The low-profile enclosure is rear-ported to provide smooth, even bass and features vibration-absorbing rubber feet to minimize unwanted resonances. Optimising features include an adjustable crossover to dial in the right amount of low end for the application plus a polarity switch to make sure the mix is always in phase.



Loud Technologies' Rohan Smith



SRM550 atop SRM1850 subwoofer

MR5mk3





Martin MAC Viper Beam and MAC III Quadray



Martin MAC Viper Beam

Martin Professional's new MAC III Quadray allows for projection of 1, 2, 3 or 4 individually-controllable rays of light for new possibilities in static or dynamic mid-air effects. The ability to individually manoeuvre and manipulate up to four beams from a single luminaire provides all-new possibilities in static or dynamic mid-air effects.

A 1500-watt lamp means the MAC III Quadray delivers enough power for even the biggest stages and venues. Like the MAC Viper Beam, the MAC III Quadray is available as a front lens replacement kit for the MAC III AirFX and houses the same high-quality feature set.



MAC III Quadray

The new **Martin MAC Viper Beam** is a beam fixture with linear zoom system that projects a very narrow pencil beam of high-intensity light. The MAC Viper Beam is available as an easy-to-install front lens replacement kit for any standard MAC Viper AirFX. The lens kit installs (and uninstalls) in only a few minutes with no need to change internal parts.

Ideal for high-impact, big beam effects and longer throws, it houses the same feature set as Martin's MAC Viper AirFX. It has also inherited the same compact form, speed and light quality using the same 1000 W source as the other Viper Family luminaires.

The MAC Viper Beam houses a selection of all-new aerial effects on two gobo wheels – a rotating gobo wheel with 5 replaceable designs and a fixed gobo wheel with 7 designs. The CMY colour mixing system offers a palette including true reds, rich ambers, primary green and deep blues with added colour choice from a 7-slot colour wheel. A linear CTO provides daylight to tungsten CCT control and expansion of the CMY palette.

Shure's Automatic Mixer Series Goes Digital. And Dante.



Shure have recently added to their SCM automatic mixer range with the inclusion of the SCM820 digital intelimix automatic mixer.

Working from the same intelimix principles of the original SCM series, the Shure SCM820 provides powerful DSP resources to provide complete control for all 8 microphone channels available. The mixer provides 5 mix modes including three factory presets (Classic, Smooth and Extreme) to provide a simple starting block which can provide settings for most applications. Along with these presets, a custom user

defined preset can be set as well as the manual mode which deactivates the intelimix function, turning the SCM820 into a standard mixer.

Each microphone channel and mix bus provides additional functions such as parametric EQ, high and low cut filters and limiters all of which are available to access via a browser based GUI.

The processors are also able to be controlled by third-party room control systems making them easily integrated into an existing system providing a high quality, flexible automixer.

The same as the earlier Shure SCM range of automixers, the SCM820 provides the user with the ability to link up to 12 units, providing a total of 96 channels of audio which can all operate under shared intelimix settings.

These linked systems can have custom groups within the linked systems and are created and managed by the GUI.

The Shure SCM820 provides front panel encoders for control of individual channel and mix levels with an LED ring to provide instant user feedback. There are also a few options of connector types, depending on the application, as well as the option to include a Dante network card for operation with other Dante enabled devices.



SHARPY WASH 330

THE LITTLE WASH-LIGHT THAT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE



Sharpy Wash 330 is an extraordinarily compact, lightweight 330W washlight, with the luminous efficiency, graphic and optical performance of a more powerful 1000W fixture. It is extremely silent and quick, fitted with a complete CMY colour system, additional colour wheel, 6.5 – 48 degree zoom, mechanical dimmer, beam shaping filter and motorised top-hat. It is an eco-friendly light, consuming very little power therefore saving on consumption costs.

The optical system is highly versatile with a zoom that ranges from 6.5° (a "narrow" angle that makes it quite similar to the Sharpy) to a striking 48°, which is perfect for theatrical and television environments.

Ultra Bright Daylight White LED Moving Light from Chroma-Q

Providing high output, flexible, low running cost illumination is a must for showroom applications and Chroma-Q delivers all that and more in their new AutoLED II daylight luminaire. Easily reconfigure your retail and display floor lighting as required without the need to manually re-position lighting elements and get all the benefits of the latest in energy efficient LED sources at the same time.

Utilising the same core technologies as the innovative Chroma-Q Studio Force D XT 12TM, the new AutoLED II is a 6,500K* CCT daylight white LED moving head fixture that boasts an extreme 16,430 lumens output for ultra bright, long distance throw; a high CRI; and a smooth linear dimming curve. Specifically designed for providing precise daylight illumination of motor industry tradeshows, fashion events and retail environments, the AutoLED II incorporates DMX control, allowing it to be operated from any DMX enabled lighting controller – saving time, energy and manpower when rigging, focusing and cabling fixtures.



AutoLED II - Lights On

PreSonus StudioLive AI

PreSonus have announced the release of their new hardware/software digital mixing and recording systems, StudioLive AI. The mixers retain the same surface-driven functionality of the StudioLive mixer series, while adding more processing power, enhanced workflow features, and Active Integration technology.

The series consists of three models: the 32-channel StudioLive 32.4.2AI, with 24 dedicated mix buses; 24-channel StudioLive 24.4.2AI, with 20 dedicated mix buses; and 16-channel StudioLive 16.4.2AI, with 16 dedicated mix buses.

The new line features premium Burr-Brown A/D/A converters and new DSP architecture based on the 64-bit Studio One audio engine. Robust DSP performance, direct Wi-Fi and LAN communication, fast and intuitive workflow, an onboard FireWire s800 interface, and a tightly integrated software suite for Mac, Windows, and iOS create a streamlined working environment for both live and studio use.

StudioLive AI-series digital mixers deliver an extended feature set, including twice as many internal effects



buses as first-generation StudioLive mixers (two reverbs and two delays on dedicated buses), the ability to create two complete sets of parametric EQ and dynamics-processor settings for each channel and bus and make quick A/B comparisons at the touch of a button, and more. StudioLive Remote-AI control software for iPad and QMix-AI aux-mix control for iPhone/iPod touch will be available free from the Apple App Store.

City Theatrical's SHoW Baby 5 Wireless DMX System



SHoW Baby, the market leading wireless DMX system from City Theatrical, has been updated to support five SHoW IDs, allowing systems to be scaled up to multi-universe broadcasts by adding additional transmitters, or to avoid interference from other SHoW Babys in the area.

SHoW Baby 5 is still plug and play. When you plug in a DMX line from your lighting controller the SHoW Baby transceiver

automatically becomes a Transmitter. Without a DMX line plugged IN, it is a Receiver.

There are still seven indicator lights on the front of the SHoW Baby, four for signal strength, one to designate whether it is a Transmitter, one to designate whether it is a Receiver, and a Data present light. In SHoW Baby 5, that Data light (now labeled ID/Data) serves a second purpose, and that is to designate the show ID. A small indented button on the back, when pushed, cycles through the five show IDs, and the user only has to be sure the Transmitter and all Receivers have the same colour selected on the Data/ID light.

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Yamaha STAGEPAS 400i and 600i

Yamaha has announced the replacement of the popular STAGEPAS 300 and 500 portable PA systems with the new 400i and 600i models. The new STAGEPAS features two sleek, lightweight speakers and a detachable powered mixer, along with one pair of speaker cables and a power cord, giving you a complete portable sound solution that can be set up quickly and easily in a variety of configurations and environments.

By combining new high-efficiency amplifiers, newly designed speakers, and high performance DSP, the new STAGEPAS delivers a significant increase in power output (400W for the 400i and 680W for the 600i) as well as substantial improvements in sound quality and reliability. Complementing the boost in performance, the addition of iPod/ iPhone connectivity, SPX digital reverbs, an on-board feedback suppressor and more versatile EQ, has improved functionality and ease of use considerably, allowing STAGEPAS to meet the demands of a much wider range of applications and users.



Sony upgrades Sound Forge Pro and SpectraLayers Pro software

Sony Creative Software has released new upgrades for Sound Forge Pro 11 [WIN] and SpectraLayers Pro 2 [WIN/MAC]. The new edition introduces more efficient recording and processing workflows and new signal and effects processing plug-ins for crafting broadcast-ready audio masters. Working with audio in the spectral realm is now even quicker and easier, with a faster processing engine and a host of new tools, methodologies and user interface improvements.

New Sound Forge Pro 11 features include One-Touch Recording, CALM (Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation Act) compliant metering, the inclusion of the iZotope® Nectar® Elements plug-in and new Restore and Repair Tools by iZotope - Declipper, Denoiser and Declicker. New SpectraLayers Pro 2 features include Spectral Casting / Molding, a process that can cast the frequency signature of one layer over that of another to derive a derivative layer that can be phase-inverted to create free spectral space for hard-to-distinguish sounds to occupy in a mix. There's also a new Shape Tool to extract sounds visually, new Frequency Range display options, One-Click noise extraction and Looping.

Sound Forge Pro 11 software retails for \$379 AU\$ Inc GST, SpectraLayers Pro 2 software for \$379 AU\$ Inc GST and both applications are bundled in the Audio Master Suite package, RRP \$749 AU\$ Inc GST. All are now available for digital download.



Christie Brio

Christie is now offering its new Christie Brio presentation product in Australia. Christie Brio allows users to virtually meet, share information and collaborate effortlessly, overcome geographical distances, and eliminate the challenge of single and multi-site workplace meetings.

Easy to install and use, Christie Brio uses wired or wireless connections to automatically coordinate and display up to five simultaneous video and audio presentations on one or two meeting room screens. Multiple attendees can now run audio and video presentations from their own handheld devices without scrambling for matching display cables and adapters, plugging in dongles, or installing and configuring new software to get it working. Whether using Macs or PCs, iPads or Android tablets, or smartphones, participants and presentations can be added to a virtual meeting in the correct aspect ratios.



Using a single, low-cost hardware Brio node, any meeting room can automatically add up to five presentations to that room's displays. Once the node processes the content it can also be made available to other Brio nodes across the country via locally managed IP networks. In this way, a variety of information – including PowerPoint and keynote presentations, audio, digital whiteboards, and videoconferencing sessions – can be pushed to any display attached to the Brio node and shared with all the displays simultaneously across multiple rooms and offices.



The P-5

PROBABLY THE BRIGHTEST LED WASH LIGHT



The P-5 does not look much, but don't let the size fool you.

This compact and light weight fixture packs a big array of features that will suit any need. With an extremely high luminous output, the LED modules have an efficacy of 58lm/W and flicker free operation suitable for any application. This IP65 rated fixture will out shine its competitors both inside and outside with its stunning light output of more than 20,000 lumens.

At only 8.9 kg the P-5 can be mounted on any surface without worrying about use of special surface anchors. The 44 pcs of high power RGBW 10W LEDs will produce a large variety of saturated colors, along with a very bright white light which provides a full palette of pastel colors and the most powerful and pure white light.



Thorsten Sattler,
MD of SGM Deutschland:

"The instant success of the P-5 in Germany was based on the fact that the product is so powerful and also that the rental companies experience huge savings on tours, because they can easily fit five P-5 units in a box of the size of one comparable product".

The town of Valašské Meziříčí may as well be known as Robe City, the same as Kitchener Ontario was once Blackberry City. Robe have two plants and a distribution centre there, with another down the road at a town called Roznov.

ROBE expands ahead of 20th birthday



Josef Valchar,
CEO at ROBE

Visiting for the first time, CX found perceptions overturned as co-founder and CEO Josef Valchar took us on a factory tour. Robe is considerably larger than we had thought.

The Czech Republic is big on manufacturing and industrial, and before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 they had held their own. Not long after, Robe emerged as an OEM manufacturer of disco lighting in the early 1990's, a 'hot' time in lighting history.

Graduating from university with lighting and electronics qualifications, Josef joined a small firm run by Ladislav Petrek, who is now his partner in Robe. The Velvet Revolution has transformed Europe and the nightclub scene was and still is very strong. Ladislav was then importing lighting and dabbled in the design of sound-to-light products.

Josef had set his sights on expanding across Europe, and they came together to form Robe Show Lighting in 1994 with six people on the team, at the start.

BY JULIUS GRAFTON



At this time, the scanner market had exploded due to new stepper motor technology. The first DMX controlled 'moving mirror' fixtures were emerging from Italy, indeed the Rimini Trade Show at that beach resort town each year saw dozens of manufacturers from around Europe appear each year.

By now Robe was a team of twelve – doubled from the start – and had bought their first factory. They were building lighting under a variety of names – again no one knew the 'Robe' brand at this stage because it wasn't displayed.

The late 1990's was a time when new DMX controllable lighting expanded the stage and effects lighting business exponentially. The trade shows (ENTECH in Australia in 1996, 1997 and 1998 and the annual PLASA show in the UK) saw huge changes each year, as the manufacturers – mainly from Europe – brought brighter, faster and more innovative products to market.

In 1999 everything changed for Robe. They introduced their 250 Spot and Wash moving heads, most notably under the TAS brand from Italian lighting manufacturer Coemar.

Deals were then struck with Saggiter (Italy), Movietec (Germany) and Starway (France) to build for them.

TIPPING POINT

Every successful business can look back and identify the point where everything changed, and for Josef it was that 250 Spot and Wash. "The business exploded", he told **CX**. "We tripled our turnover between 1999 and 2000 and then again doubled our turnover between 2000 and 2001".

They bought a former textile factory complex in Valašské Meziříčí which was stripped, refitted and became what is now the assembly plant. This is a long, white three level building which at the time was a massive investment.

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Virtually EVERYTHING is made within the Robe factories in Czech Republic

Amazingly they had grown to this point without external funding. This alone is an extraordinary achievement, more so since to this day, Josef informs **CX** that the company does not borrow money from banks or anyone else. All expansion is funded entirely from profits and their own sources.

It was hardly surprising yet very brave that the inevitable moment arrived when Robe launched itself as a brand in its own right to the probable horror of some of its OEM partners!

MEET ROBE

By 2002 the business had more than enough strength to enter the market under its own marque. **CX** recalls the emergence of ROBE at the time, knowing that they had already by this time built product for a host of others. It was a gamble, but it quickly paid off with an initial distribution network of 50 countries (100 today) being inked in the first year. One – of many - palpable strengths of Robe is that Josef runs the sales and marketing departments, while Ladislav looks after the ‘engine room’

– the factories and the administration. Both are integrally involved in product development

Every time Josef attended a trade show (he travels usually half the year) he would soak up feedback from the users. In this way he was and is one of the most successful identities and ‘public faces’ in the lighting industry, and today possibly the most successful survivor from those crazy days of the 1990’s.

New markets were entered, research and development was expanded – and all in the Czech Republic. The early and mid 2000’s saw a shift where many manufacturers set their sights on lower cost manufacturing in Asia. But Robe stayed steadfast, and eventually purchased their electronic PCB manufacturer Dioflex located in a nearby town.

Whilst Robe grew in the mid 2000’s, many of its former OEM partners struggled on their own without manufacturing or research and development. The key to success is to control destiny, and you can’t do that when you rely too heavily on outside sources.



Paint shop at Robe

THEN CAME THE LED

Josef was fast to market when the LED became viable for stage lighting. This saw a whole new brand called Anolis established to market high end LED fixtures and products for architectural markets.

Anolis took off, and was moved into its own factory next to the PCB (electronics) plant in the next village. Robe then started to release LED product with the RED series. LED quickly became a new growth engine, helping ROBE through the economic storm of the GFC which saw many European

manufacturers reduce facilities and withdraw from markets.

2009, saw the launch of the ROBIN series and 2010 that of the phenomenally successful LEDWash series sparking a new era in robe's development. The Robin moving head fixtures incorporated the RGBW LED module, positioning Robe with possibly the broadest range of LED fixtures on the market.

Last year the ROBIN DL Series capped the range, bringing the highest power LED technology yet, and making Robe's LED product offering as wide as its conventional light source offering.

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Mark Lizotte, 2013

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Product test room, one of several

THE FACILITY

Josef took **CX** on a wide ranging tour of the assembly plant, which in the summer break of 2013 was expanded with a new wing added to the three story building, finished just days before we arrived, and Josef continually pointed out small finishes missing here and there.

“We need to get this floor surface to match that one”. Then the stairwell: “We need to paint this railing”. He has an eye for detail, because all we saw was new, along with the fresh smell of new paint.

The bottom level of the assembly building is component storage, endless bins of widgets and metal, glass and wiring. 20,000 part types live in there. These days they photograph each component, so the bar code when scanned can produce an image on screen to confirm the object is like this and not like that.

On the middle floor, everyone wears a blue ROBE shirt, and the assembly lines stretch down the long building. Windows each side provide mainly natural light. Finished goods move over to the new wing for testing in one of three halls with moveable benches and pull down projection screens if required.

Up on the top floor staff wear red ROBE shirts and the assembly lines cater to larger fixtures. Everything moves between levels on carts via elevators.

Across the back lot is the metalwork plant, with computerised milling and stamping machines. These

workers wear black Robe shirts, which seems practical given the more robust nature of the environment. Did I mention everything is very clean and tidy?

Next door is the brand new paint shop, and again another plant does plastic fabrication – a sheet of plastic is heated, stamped in a mould, then the whole resulting shape is put in another automated milling machine for holes and slots and trimming.

What can possibly be made anywhere else? I wrack my mind. “I know, Josef. Where do you get your roadcases from?” Of course he has the answer. “We make them at another factory!”

THE FUTURE

Our final stop is the Showroom, also new and very impressive. Entering a bar and reception area, there are some displays and fantastic contemporary decor themed to match the Robe image which means splashes of red – the seats – to emulate the red dot in the black Robe marque logo.

Through the doors is the theatre – 35 lavish deeply cushioned red theatre recliner chairs, tiered up, and a red velvet curtain, gently lit. The show starts, just for me.

Curtains open, a theatre set of a building facade and an interior on the right side is there and the gentle soundtrack heralds each new lighting idea, wholly from LED fixtures, moving beams, diffused gobos, a moving beam frames off on a picture on a wall.

Pack and go at Robe



Then the show reaches a scene change and suddenly the set breaks in two and swings apart to reveal a show stage, with drums and backline on risers. A punchy soundtrack allows a huge rig of everything to show off, dazzling and punching and beaming and strobing and lighting. All this is missing are dancing girls, and you imagine if the moment is required ... Robe could organise that!

The show ends, and I applaud – two hands clapping.

Outside in the bar, Josef tries to induce me to drink, usually easy to arrange but as I've flown straight here from the USA I need to maintain a degree of coherency to conclude our interview.

How soon until LED replaces conventional, I ask?

"There's a push from people to keep tungsten alive in the market" Josef says. "In theatre tungsten has certain characteristics that can't be replaced by LED. Think about skin tones. LED has certain issues".

"I like to think five years ahead but of course LED progress is moving so fast. But there will be more efficiencies from the LED – some new development of the semi conductor will see that – it can do so much more. Then the limit is with heat management."

"You need a tiny point source (lamp) for a beam light too, as small as possible, and a LED can't do that. So I think discharge lamps will be around for five or ten years more."

One thing Josef is glad he didn't do was enter the lighting console market. We compare brands to try to count how many there are – and come to around 15. "Every trade show there are more again, smaller consoles".

Robe is a lighting company. They control their destiny. They also support their community, with Skoda and VW cars dominating their fleet outside. I leave late in the day, headed for a nice hotel in a nearby mountain resort village – and as Josef drops me off, it becomes apparent everyone knows him here as well.

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THE MILL REPORT

When is a vintage classic not a vintage classic?
When it's a poorly maintained Bakelite basket case.



Don't kid yourself or your clients; when a piece of gear - no matter how spectacular or rare it might be - is faulty, it's time to pull it out of service and call your tech. You know, *your tech*: the guy who repairs and maintains your gear. . .

I spent more money than I earned last week repairing gear: mics, the Neve console, headphones, leads, stands... you name it. If I ever write a book it's going to be entitled: *Money In, Money Out – The Dubious Life of a Penniless Producer*. (Later on I'll write the sequel: *Maintenance: The Gift That Keeps On Taking*). But hang on, now that I think about it, I also bought Audio-Technica's new AT 5050 condenser microphone last week – that is, paid for the one that never left The Mill after I reviewed it in **CX** a few months ago. Clearly I only have myself to blame for my financial plight. But hey, two-minute noodles are cheap so I'm getting by.

Another thing I've had to face up to this week is that my beloved Neumann U67 needs a new capsule, so next week it's off to Gunter Wagner (wagner-microphones.com) – the king of Neumann repairs in Australia – for the royal treatment. The U67 is just about my favourite mic on planet earth; an amazing microphone that I plan on taking with me when I die. Ironically, it's mostly been sitting idle these last few months because every time I've tried to use it it's popped, spluttered and emitted sounds of rolling thunder. Not a good look when you're trying to record a sensitive vocal. I've used it on drums occasionally since, but barely got away with that either. Now is the time to bite the bullet.

RP&M

Repairs and maintenance are a fact of life in the studio, as they are everywhere else in the audio industry. And yet, paying good money to maintain the gear we own isn't something many of us necessarily embrace from the get-go. Most of us only face up to the economic reality of it over time.

I know when I was younger the very thought of spending five grand on console maintenance, when I'd already spent

BY ANDY STEWART

“Gear with known ‘issues’ should be placed here...”



“Not left here...”



20 purchasing it, seemed completely crazy. “Man, that means I’ve effectively paid 25 for it!” That’s how my brain rationalised maintenance costs back then; I just added them to the purchase price! I was always much more concerned about buying something else with my money – not necessarily something that worked perfectly either – than repairing and improving the gear I already had. Was I just a tight-arse? No, I don’t think so. I didn’t mind spending money per sé; I just liked having something new to show for it. I had gear lust... a disease that makes you great at acquiring stuff, but hopeless at repairing it.

YOU’VE GOT PAVS

But all that changes pretty quickly when this illness – let’s call it ‘Pro Audio Vanity Syndrome’ – leads to an embarrassing equipment failure right in the middle of an important session. At that point all the great looking vintage gear you’ve set up around you in your fancy digs only serves to make you look like a tool. ‘Head in the Sand’ maintenance is a schedule you only get away with for so long before one day it bites you ferociously on the arse. I know... I have the scars to prove it.

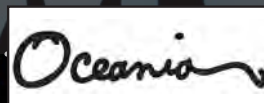
The best studio to work in, whether it’s your own, or one you frequent on a regular basis, is the one where repairs and maintenance are an accepted cost of doing good business. I don’t care how many Neumann mics or Neve channel strips a studio might possess; if they’re dodgy, crackly, intermittent or noisy, they’re worse than an Alto preamp driving a Behringer dynamic. If the latter chain is new and working flawlessly, that’s the setup I’d rather use. If a recording chain is snap, crackling and popping like breakfast cereal, what bloody use is it to anyone?

“IT JUST DOESN’T WORK PROPERLY”

Poorly maintained or dysfunctional gear frustrates engineers and musicians alike, even though, if you’re the studio owner, they may never air their grievances directly to you. The sobering bottom line however is this: your clients will *always* tell someone, so it’s preferable they confide in you. Otherwise the problem is manifestly worse, and for two reasons. Not only does it reinforce the delusion that you’re getting away with this bad practice, it conceals the urgency of the maintenance problem you have, and spreads the rumour far and wide that your place just doesn’t work properly.

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THE MILL REPORT...

continued

If there is equipment in your rack that's faulty, I'd strongly urge you to remove and repair it... *today!* Don't just leave it there because its Bakelite knobs and VU meters look cool. If a piece of audio gear is only going to disappoint a client after they finally give up in disgust after fiddling with it for an hour, it's a dead-set liability.

ONLY 4K? I'LL TAKE IT!

The craziest thing about most studio owners, especially those who typically work alone, is that they just keep buying stuff, most of which they'll never need, and half of which they'll probably never even turn on. EBay, the pro audio forums and various other second-hand trading posts are all awash with pro audio gear that often looks amazing – and in some cases *is* amazing – but which isn't necessarily relevant to your circumstances.

If you're not careful, your aim as an audio professional can quickly morph from a desire to make and record great sounds into an unhealthy pursuit of fancy gear for its own sake, whether it be in good working order or not. Perhaps it's just a rite of passage we all have to experience – to buy a pile of 'vintage' (read broken or irreparable) gear, and then spend 5, 10 or 20 years sifting through it, and shifting it from one environment to the next. Sound familiar?

THE ORIGINAL AIM WAS?

Don't get me wrong, buying great audio gear is something I've spent the bulk of my life doing, so I'm hardly going to bag other people out for the behaviour. Even as I type this article, the very idea of going online and looking for a classic old compressor or another microphone seems quietly attractive to me, as embarrassing as that is to admit.

As long as you come through the 'PAVS' with a healthy sense of what sounds great and what doesn't, and a more objective sense of what gear is important to own to get the job done professionally, you'll always be closer to your original ambition: which was to make and record great sounds – a healthy and admirable pursuit.

PS: I have an old compressor for sale – looks great; doesn't work so well... interested?

TOOLBOX review

ELECTROLUBE EML200F

In the spirit of this maintenance focused Mill Report, I thought I'd do a short, but particularly relevant review of a product that's been around for, well... I don't know how long really. All I know is that it has saved my arse on countless occasions. The product in question is the humble can of Electrolube EML200F.

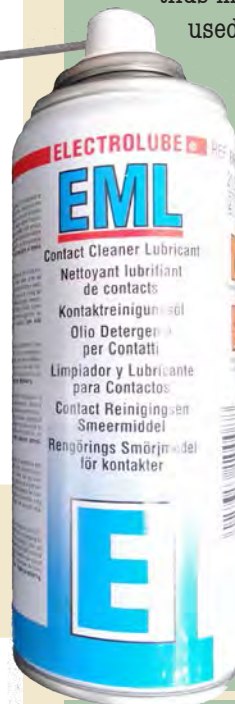
Unlike many other products that perform a specific role in the maintenance of electronic equipment – Caig's Pro Gold or Red Deoxit etc – EML is relatively cheap (about \$7.50), is versatile and brilliantly effective at silencing noisy pots, taming scratchy or intermittent switches and restoring dodgy connectors back to life. It's the best one-stop-solution cleaner I know for when things go south at gigs or in the studio. Whether you're a musician, a studio engineer, a producer or a stage manager, if you only ever own one can of switch cleaner, this should be it.

EML200F is both a cleaner and a lubricant, so it doesn't dry out switch mechanisms or reduce them to a sticky mess like other products can. Electrolube's own definition of the product is as follows: "A solvent/lubricant blend designed to remove surface contamination and oxidation from all metallic contact surfaces. Reduces electrical resistance across the switch or connector by increasing the surface area of the contact." According to my tech, Rob Squire: "EML is not the world's best cleaner but it's very good... and very versatile." Caig's Red Deoxit on the other hand, for example, is brilliant at removing corrosion but it needs to be rinsed off, as it contains no lubrication, thus making it potentially disastrous on switches when used incorrectly.

I have repaired more noises in equipment with this can of magic spray than I can recollect. It's one of those must-have products for any audio industry type who calls himself (or herself) professional.

WES Components in Sydney sell cans of EML for \$7.50 last time I checked: a bargain, and a lifesaver.

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Integrate 2013 – Here we are again

Hi there! Didn't I just see you a few weeks ago? On a really similar stand? Showing me the same products? Ah, it's Wednesday – this must be a tradeshow. Tradeshow fatigue is real, and hit the industry with a dull and inevitable thud this August. Jason Allen was on the ground, again....



The Integrate expo ran August 27 to 29 at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, one month after ENTECH and SMPTE co-located at the same venue, in the same halls. For wholesalers who also deal in musical instruments, it was just two weeks after AMAC ran in the Gold Coast. Integrate, incorporating CEDIA Asia Pacific and InfoComm University, is oriented to the integration market, but the crossover of products, expertise and people means that a lot of the same faces had the same conversations and paid time and money for the privilege.

BY JASON ALLEN

Hey good lookin'

The show looked great. A busy floor, quality attendees and lots of shiny fun toys. The screen, projection and data specialists come to the fore at Integrate, and this show is the best fit for their products. Heavyweight corporates like Samsung get to flex their budgets and the stands are sleek, clean and pulsating with the light from impossibly thin high-definition screens.

And big screens too. Dragon View took up most of Hall 5's wall with their hi-def LED monster, coming in at around \$500,000 worth of eye-candy. There were LED floors you could stand on from Philips and Glux, and modular panels you could play Angry Birds on courtesy of Christie. Pixel mapping and image blending software vendors like Dataton pumped out the content, and you could manage it all with high bandwidth switching from companies like Lightware.

This ain't rock 'n' roll

With most of their market addressed at ENTECH, luminaires and lighting control took a backseat to their more install based relatives. ULA dazzled with LED digital signage from VuePix, and Jands showed off ETC's architectural range of interfaces.



Audio was well represented with ceiling and surface mount speakers from just about everyone, new offerings from Mackie and the Australian debut of EAW's new flagship line array, Anya. Amber Technology showcased the integration of their domestic audio lines through commercial data products from NuVo, while Syntec (soon to become Sennheiser Australia) debuted the new LSP 500 Pro wireless PA system.

20ccs of AV, Stat!

This is a forum when the highly specialised sectors of the industry get to show off. Medical technology from ProAV reminded us just how important AV is to our lives. Health care is now a deeply connected, video-conferenced and data-heavy field. Screens, microphones, loudspeakers and processing are almost as vital now as scalpels.

Tying it all together were major presences from AMX and Crestron, both expanding past their traditional role as control sources. Similarly, Extron presented a broad offering, pitching for the whole job. Notable by their absence were some of the major players, such as Mitsubishi and Barco.



CMI's Simon Tait

The 2013 AVIA winners in full

Best Commercial or Government Installation \$500K+

Winner: Rutledge AV
 Project: Perth Arena -
 Digital Signage Feature Piece

Best Commercial or Government Installation up to \$500K

Winner: Acoustic Directions
 Project:
 Willoughby City Council -
 Urban Screen at The Concourse, Chatswood

Best application of AV in a Museum or Display

Winner: Pro AV Solutions Queensland
 Project:
 Queensland University of Technology -
 The Cube

Best application of AV in Education

Winner: Pro AV Solutions Queensland
 Project: Queensland University of Technology -
 The Cube

Best application of AV in a Production \$500K+

Winner: Auditoria
 Project: London 2012 -
 Olympic and Paralympic Ceremonies

Best application of AV in a Production up to \$500K

Winner: The Electric Canvas
 Project: City of Melbourne -
 Melbourne Town Hall:
 The Nights Before Christmas

And the winners are...

The annual AVIA awards were presented on the first night of the show. These are a welcome event in the integration industry, and create a positive, celebratory atmosphere. Rutledge AV, Acoustic Directions, Pro AV Solutions Queensland, Auditoria and The Electric Canvas all picked up gongs, but the applause and respect was there for all of the nominees. Unlike their production colleagues, the integrator doesn't get to stand in the spotlight, so any public recognition of excellence is a good thing.



Shane Cannon AVIA Rutledge



Luis Miranda AVIA Auditoria



Duncan Fry & Tony Hosking - drinking not winning



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- PURE Heavy Duty Fiber Cable

Yamaha's Mark Condon



David Watson, David Bunn & Wayne D'Chong



Sandy Rutledge & Shane Cannon



Musiclab's Russell Stork & Doug Watt



TAGs Silvio Miconi & Ewan McDonald



In through the out door

There were many rumblings from the floor about single brands or products coming in through multiple distribution channels. Whether it's the same OEM producing identical products for wholesaler's house brands, or manufacturers choosing multiple avenues, it doesn't sit well. In a market as small and geographically disadvantaged as Australia, this phenomenon is seen to erode GP and detract from support and promotion. When it's the brand itself that chooses this strategy, folk are left scratching their heads.

One show to rule them all

Integrate is a quality show, as are ENTECH and SMPTE. But now consider the mid-sized integrator who just sent three or four people to attend. They just did this a month ago, because in addition to screens, projection and data, they also need to talk to their audio and lighting suppliers. No-one puts in this equipment in isolation. So here they are again.

Spare a thought as well for the wholesalers and distributors. They needed to be at ENTECH/SMPTE to show their wares to their broadcast and production clients. But the commercial integration market is estimated to be around 10 times the size of the production market alone, so they can't afford not to be at Integrate. Bye-bye to at least another \$50K and two weeks of work.

Then there are the wholesalers who vote with their budgets and choose not to play the game, which is a rational and economically reasonable position. They may still attend, but their very presence on the show floor draws disapproving tut-tutting from those who are paying to be there. Fairly or unfairly, they are seen to be profiting from the time and expenditure of others, and bad vibes permeate the air.

We don't need this. This industry is too small to sustain it. We can't afford the time or the money to be doing the same thing in the same place twice for a very slightly different audience. We certainly don't need to be creating bad blood between companies based on how they choose to spend their marketing dollars. Enough. If there's still a sustainable business model for a big centrally located show, we only need one with everybody in it, at a minimum of cost and effort, with maximum return for exhibitors and attendees alike.

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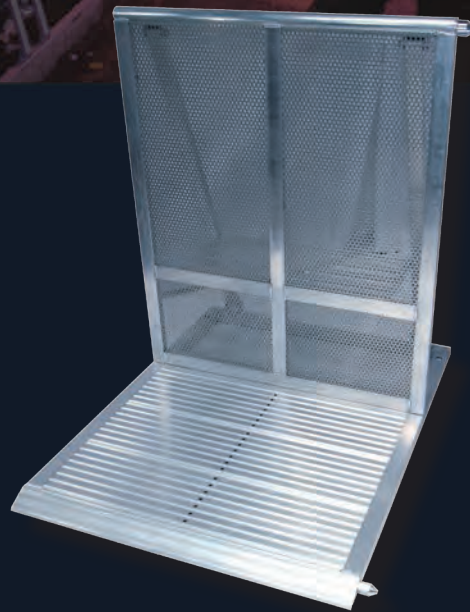
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MEETS OR EXCEEDS:

International Standard BS EN 13200-3:2005 (Spectator Facilities) Annex A
WA Health Directorate 2004 (Guidelines for concerts, events and organised gatherings)
Crowd Control At Venues And Events. A practical Occupational Health and Safety Guide. WorkSafe (Vic) September 2006
Australian standard AS/NZS 1170 parts 0.1 and 2:2002 (AKA loading codes)
Australian standard AS/NZ 1664: 1: 1997 (Aluminium structures)
Australian Standard AS 4687-2007 (temporary fencing and hoardings)
MCK Metals Pacific. Strength and resistance load testing, November 2006
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LISTEN HERE

GULLIBLE'S TRAVELS

When there's a problem during a recording or mix session, do you phone a friend, go 50/50 or rely on your experience to get the job done?

BY ANDY STEWART

There seem to be countless audio enthusiasts in Australia at the moment who seem gullible in the extreme to any ol' hype they read on any ol' forum or website they visit – present company excepted of course.

If someone claims a product to be the best thing since sliced bread "on female vocals", for instance, these budding engineers seem to swallow the catch phrase hook, line and sinker... never questioning whether these types of generalisations are mostly garbage in the first place. Worse, some then spread this misinformation as their own!

If a mic is said to be equivalent to a Neumann U47 "only quieter," they rush out and buy it on the spot. Then, when the rose-coloured reality turns out to be refuse they have a heart attack... and ring me, for some reason!

GULLI-BULL

Why are people so gullible? Is this a recent phenomenon or have audio enthusiasts always been this easily duped by thinly disguised hype? One thing's for sure, the web is spreading misinformation about audio equipment 10 times faster than any genuine information about real experiences and practised techniques. As Edgar Allan Poe once wrote:

"don't believe half of what you read, none of what you hear."

He might have predated the web by 200-odd years, but I'm pretty sure in this instance he was referring directly to it. I've never read so much fifth-hand clap-trap in my life about mixing, mic technique and assorted pro audio equipment as I have on forums and websites. I've seen people posting on recording forums that haven't actually recorded a thing in 10 years. In one case, I spotted an old acquaintance ranting on a mixing forum as if he knew the process backwards, when in reality, he's virtually never mixed anything... ever! For the last 10 years he's in fact been a banker (or is that wanker?), but for whatever reason, he chooses audio forums as his 'outlet'; relying on the flattery of others to keep him from robbing the bank and escaping to South America. Actually, maybe he should. If he did he could afford to set up a recording studio there and quickly discover he knows two fifths of diddly squat about it. I think he just likes the twinkly lights. Perhaps he should get a job at Beacon Lighting.

I hate it when people think they can substitute real experience for a few loose dregs trawled off forums. Get your own experiences would be my advice; there's no substitute



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for them. All the reading in the world about the experience of others can never match your own concrete, verifiable, confidence building work. Besides, living vicariously through others is just a wasted life.

DO U67s & SM57 REALLY SOUND DIFFERENT?

I'm not going to answer that... If you want to know how a Neumann U67 compares to a Shure SM57, stick them on two mic stands side by side and track with them for a week. Don't just go on a forum and try to absorb a bunch of trite adjectives penned by little spotty whitebread, who once used them in his bedroom to record a YouTube rendition of *Stairway To Heaven*. "Yeah man, the 67 sounded cool... I mean, 'warm'. The 57 sucked!"

You can't learn anything from advice like that. It's like saying you've been to Hawaii because you've seen *Big Wednesday*. You can't honestly know anything about a place when you've only seen a movie filmed there or read a brochure promoting the place. You surely have to *go there* and experience it for yourself. The same rule applies to microphones...

SH** FOR DAYS

Obviously I'm not saying you can't learn things by reading or discussing things with others. Of course you can. But it's important to be able to distinguish between the musings of an experienced engineer (assuming they're not getting a kick back from a product manufacturer) and the regurgitated meanderings of an internet wannabe. The former may have an opinion worth noting, but still not necessarily relied upon; the latter is more likely to be on the forum looking for friends – harsh perhaps, but often true.

If you want to learn something about, say, quantum physics, you don't ask John Laws for his 'impression' or my mother because she's looked up at the stars once or twice. You ask someone who studies it: lives, breathes and eats the topic for breakfast. And even then you probably need to take half of it with a grain of salt. The point being, there are those worth listening to, and those for whom air is only inhaled so they can convert it into plain old nonsense.

DO, DON'T REHASH

I would wager that if someone who spends 10 hours a week on pro audio forums spent the equivalent amount of time testing microphones in different positions and in front of different subjects, or studying the inner workings of reverb units, compression settings and gain structures, they'd know 10 times more about their subject. They'd also start to realise how much there is to know about the topic and perhaps learn some humility along the way. Dare I say it, they might even start posting less because they're too busy in the studio recording or mixing something!

There is no-one more dangerous than an inexperienced engineer with a strong opinion, except perhaps an 'internet forum' engineer with someone else's. One is learning, but has more to discover... the other should get a job at Beacon Lighting (no offence to anyone working there) where the twinkly lights are sure to enthrall. They even have fans.

I reckon most people on pro audio forums should go by the moniker: "Exebeche," after the American Indian character from *Dead Man* whose name means: "He who talks loud, says nothing."

When sh** hits the fan during a tracking session, are you really going to look to the forums for your answers? Surely you'd be much better off with a swag of personal experiences burnt into that brain of yours from which to draw when the chips are down. You'll learn exponentially faster that way, and come out the other side a vastly more qualified engineer.



Andy Stewart owns and operates The Mill in Victoria, a mixing and mastering facility with clients ranging from Paul Kelly to Gotyé. He's happy to respond to any pleas for recording or mixing help... contact him at: andy@themill.net.au

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THE IMMORTAL, MICHAEL JACKSON SHOW HAS ALREADY TOURED NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE, THE SHOW IS BACK ON THE ROAD AGAIN, OPENING IN BEIJING THIS WEEK BEFORE HEADING SOUTH THROUGH CHINA AND ASIA ON ITS WAY DOWN UNDER TO A SERIES OF SHOWS IN AUSTRALIA IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER. NEW CX CONTRIBUTOR, JUSTIN STEWART, GIVES US A PREVIEW BEFORE THE "CIRCUS" HITS OUR SHORES.....

The names "Cirque Du Soleil" and "Michael Jackson" are about as big as it gets in the entertainment world, my expectations were pretty high for this event – I wasn't sure what to expect exactly – but I had high expectations. Did it deliver? Well yes and no.....but we'll get to that.

If you believe the hype, MJ had visited CDS headquarters in Canada, he had been a fan of CDS and there had been talk about a collaboration production at some point in the future, so it's no surprise to some that this show became a reality, albeit without the man himself.

The show tours like a rock n roll tour, 38 trucks are used to transport everything from production gear, staging, props and scenery to costumes and even washing machines. Production gear is mostly supplied by Canadian company Solotech.



CHRISTIE 18K HD'S

AUDIO

With Michael Jackson it's all about the music and apart from personal arguments about the song selection, it would be pretty hard to be disappointed with the music - it was great! The Estate of Michael Jackson provided never before available access to MJ recordings and Master tapes. An amazing soundtrack was built around a pristine Vocal. The band was super "tight" and played with the vocal in such a way that you often forgot that "He" wasn't actually there. The vocal sparkled through the Meyer system: breathy, powerful, crystal clear and full of detail, subtle finger snaps and gestures could be heard as though you were concentrating on a CD through a set of headphones. The kick and bass in the intro to Billie Jean showcased the subs nicely; it felt like the system was just idling waiting to be opened up. The audio seemed smooth and effortless all the way to the back of the cheap seats, I actually would have liked it to be a bit louder – to get a bit more energy in the room.

Solotech are touring the new Meyer LEO PA system. LEO is Meyers "linear, large scale sound reinforcement system". The LEO array "system" comprises: LEO-M cabinet, a newly

BY JUSTIN STEWART
PERFORMANCE PHOTOGRAPHY BY OSA IMAGES



designed 1100-LFC low frequency control element and the Galileo Callisto array processor for routing, alignment and processing. LEO-M is a long-throw cabinet. Each cabinet comprises 2 x 15" drivers and 2 x 4" compression drivers. LEO-M cabinet width is the same as the Meyer MICA cabinets and the boxes may be flown together with MICA's at the bottom of the stack for downfill coverage. As with all Meyer speakers, LEO-M is self powered and features new amplifier design for exceptional size/weight to SPL ratio. The main LR array for the Beijing shows comprised an array of 15 cabinets mostly LEO-M elements plus some MICA cabinets near the bottom of each side. 8 x subs flown each side (Meyer 700's) with additional 1100-LFC floor mounted. A selection of "old faithful" UPA-1P's and 2P's handled front fill.

Both FOH and Monitor control positions featured DiGiCo SD7 desks. Monitors comprised MSL-4 as side fill along with Sennheiser transmitters and receivers mixture of earpieces. Stage mics are almost exclusively AKG product.

LIGHTING

Lighting was handled via GrandMA 2 consoles (main and back-up), almost 420 fixtures make up the show. There is up to 50 people on stage so ensuring everyone can be seen is no small task before the "sparkle" is added. Fixtures comprise Vari-Lite VL880's, VLX 3's, Philips Vari-Lite 3500 Washes FX, Martin Professional Atomic Strobe 3000's, Color Block's and i-Pix BB7 Blinders.

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PROJECTION AND VISUALS

4 x Christie 18k HD projectors supplied the images to the massive main stage “screen” (curtain). 2500 Lighthouse Video Blade elements are used in the creation of the video screens. A clever central screen is built with a plexi-glass cover and actually tilts throughout the show through a range of positions: from being a flat stage to an angled ramp to a vertical screen. 2 large “portrait” format screens move on and off stage throughout the show and a wide format screen in 3 sections is permanently set behind the band.

Clever video content was co-ordinated and perfectly timed with the CDS performers. Well rehearsed interaction between the dancer’s gestures and the stunning visuals added some “magic” to the show. New content and classic MJ footage is blended together creating a visually stunning show. Focussing on the screens and listening to the soundtrack it was easy at times to forget the King of Pop was not actually present.

Clever wireless, battery LED devices were also incorporated in to costumes and other “props” adding some further surprises and “magic”.

Pre-show advertising and general IMAG for the audience was facilitated via a rear-projection screen/projector combo flown either side of the main stage. Doubled stacked Panasonic 20k’s delivered the images but even these were noticeably duller than the punchy, sharp LED images just a few meters away.



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MasterCard Arena Beijing,
THIS WAS THE OLYMPIC
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SUMMARY

During the quiet moments the hardcore MJ fans could be heard across the stadium calling "Michael" & "we love you". There were tears, fortunately it was dark and I was able to be discrete about my emotions.

House lights up and a pleasant French/Canadian voiceover telling me the show was over in Chinese and English. Within moments an army of security guards were ushering everyone out of the stadium. It was over. I had enjoyed it but I still found myself feeling a little unsatisfied.....It wasn't a really good concert and it wasn't a really good CDS show. All the production elements were there, stunning visuals and immersive, powerful sound yet something (someone?) was missing.

If you work in production and event staging you will enjoy the spectacle and the production detail. It looked like a concert, it sounded like a concert, but it was more like a rock eisteddfod than a concert (a really good rock eisteddfod mind you). There was no opportunity for an encore and no interaction or connection between the star and the audience. The spectacle of a typical CDS big-top or installed theatre show wasn't there...sure there was acrobatics, pole dancing, amazing costumes, clever stunts, someone in a "bubbles" the monkey suit (or was that a real monkey?) and a one-legged dancer who was amazing, but other CDS shows I have seen have been better.

I stepped out of the Arena into the sweltering summer evening, my iphone told me it was 36 degrees and the pollution "PM2.5" reading was a nasty 215 or "hazardous" (compare Melbourne or Sydney where PM2.5 rarely gets above 35), it could be worse I thought to myself and at least the trains are air-conditioned, it will be a nice ride home.....ah yep just me and about 5000 of my closest Chinese friends.....

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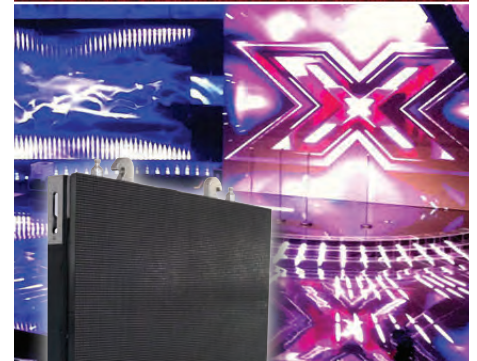
ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

JUSTIN STEWART IS AN AUSTRALIAN AV AND EVENT PRODUCTION PROFESSIONAL BASED IN BEIJING.

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SENNHEISER LSP-500

PORTABLE PA SENNHEISER STYLE

BY JIMMY DEN-UDEN



FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER THE PORTABLE PA MARKET IN AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN CATERED TO BY THE SAME COUPLE OF MANUFACTURERS. THEY'VE DONE A PRETTY GOOD JOB FOR A LOT OF APPLICATIONS— JUST ASK ANY WEDDING CELEBRANT. BUT EVERYTHING I'VE EVER USED HAS FELT KIND OF, ENTRY LEVEL. THAT'S OKAY TOO — REMEMBER THE TARGET AUDIENCE. THE SENNHEISER LSP-500 IS SOMETHING OF A DIFFERENT BEAST — THE PRICE TAG ALONE GIVES THAT MUCH AWAY. IT'S APPROPRIATE TO CONSIDER THIS THE FIRST REALLY HIGH END, PROFESSIONAL PORTABLE PA SYSTEM TO EVER HIT THE AUSTRALIAN MARKET. IT DOES MORE, AND IT DOES IT WITH LESS FUSS.

In some ways the LSP-500 is not too much of a deviation from the norm. It's a speaker box with battery, connectors and a mixer on the back. Not so normal is that the speaker is a two-way system (8" woofer and 3/4" compression driver). Dispersion is stated at 80x60 degrees (HxV). The dual

batteries are hot swappable, so with a few extras on charge you can keep it running indefinitely. The digital mixer is a very nice thing too — quick and intuitive to navigate. The more you explore, the more differences become apparent.

A big focus behind the LSP-500 was obviously making it totally wireless for very quick and tidy deployment. To this end, three internal bays are setup and pre-cabled to accept Sennheiser evolution G3 series receivers and transmitters. The LSP-500 doesn't mind if you use 100, 300 or 500 series — they all work. There's even a data connection for 300 and 500 series models. If you're only using the one unit, you can load all the bays with receivers and have three wireless sources (handheld, lapel, headset mics, or even instrument via belt pack). If, on the other hand you need more than one speaker, you'd instead use a transmitter in one bay to send audio to other units. Of course it's easy to have multiple units tuned into one transmitter too, so many speakers is no problem. If they're located in a different time plane (as often happens), you can delay each speaker internally to maintain phase.

All that's great, but controlling several brainy speakers all in different locations is kind of a pain. Here's where it gets really interesting — the LSP-500 is WiFi capable. Drop an access point in the room, tell each unit to connect to it, then you can control the whole lot from an iPad app. It's rather cool, and it certainly beats walking. The app lets you arrange multiple units in a layout which corresponds to their actual physical placement. If you don't mind a few cables, you can link multiple systems via normal mic leads instead of wirelessly.

The digital mixer allows you to adjust level for each of the inputs from the three wireless bays, as well as a variety of cabled input options. There's a mic input (with optional +48V), a stereo line input on dual RCAs, a USB player, and just to cap it off you can stream to the LSP-500 over Bluetooth. I tried it. It works. In fact, it all works. Really well too. Probably worthy of mention at this point is that the system sounds fantastic. I had high expectations for sound quality, and they were more than met. Being a two-way system it's got better top end definition than a lot of single driver systems — this is to be expected, what with the laws of physics applying and all.

Run time off the dual battery setup is 6-8 hours depending on how hard you push the unit, and presumably how much wireless action is involved. The system runs on what look very much like Sony NP-1 batteries, and an indicator on the display tells you which battery is in use, so you know the other is good to swap. When it's connected to the power, the batteries charge automatically. NP-1 struck me as a weird battery format yet the runtime seems solid, so I'll just be quiet, and thankful for not having to deal with yet another

THE OLED DISPLAY IS GREAT



unnecessarily proprietary format. If the battery runs low, you get an alert on the iPad app.

The integrated top-hat on the base of the LSP-500 allows you to tilt it back and forth to an appropriate listening angle when placed on a stand. That's very easy to do too – our test system weighed in around 15.35kg with one receiver in the bay. There's a white slip-cover accessory available which lets you dress it up to look like not-a-black-speaker-box. Very nice for weddings and galleries and such like. Not that it looks bad – the wood cabinet is nicely finished and the front foam covered grille looks very tidy. It looks justifiably expensive.



NOTE THE LSP-500

RUNNING WITH ONE BATTERY REMOVED!

At the end of the day I think the LSP-500 is unlikely to be taken up by existing portable users – it's a different grade of system and sits at a different price point. Where it will find success is in high end applications – especially corporates. The unit is designed to replace conventional wired PA systems, not wireless ones. Sennheiser clearly set out to build a high end product in the LSP-500, and I reckon they've succeeded.

BRAND: SENNHEISER
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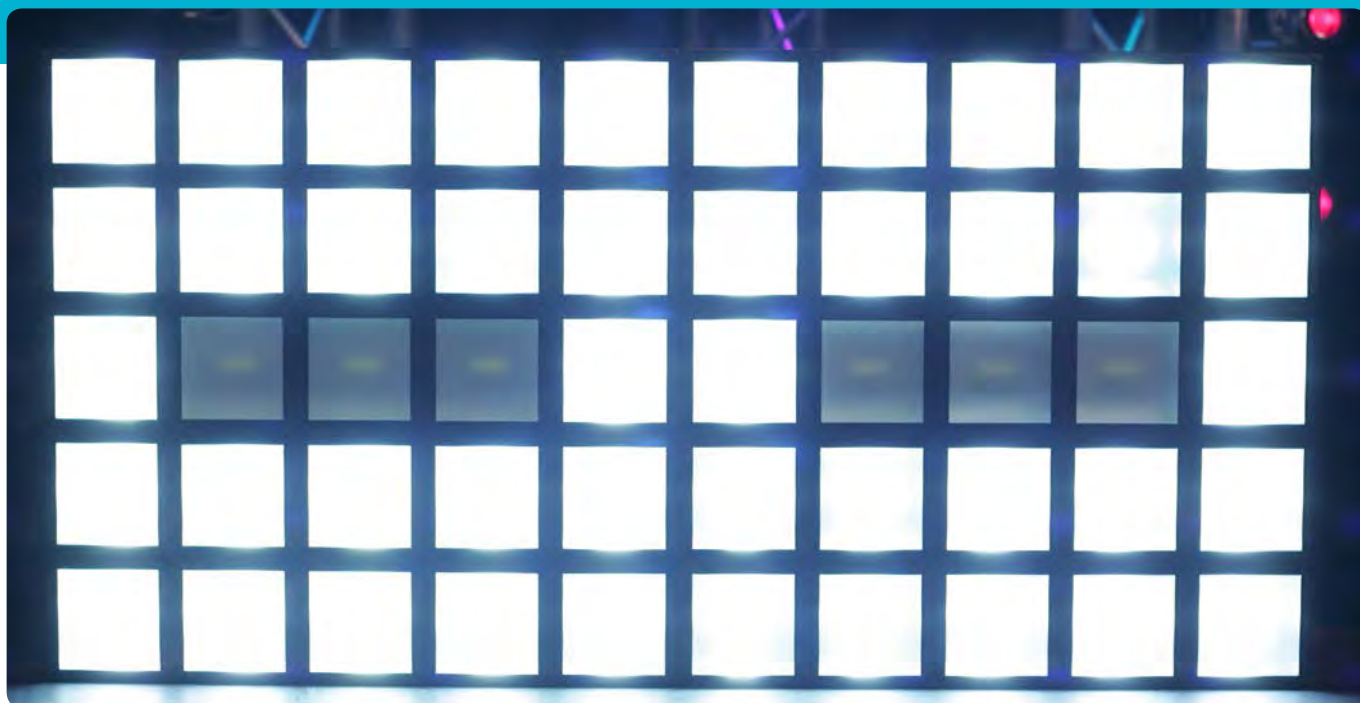


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MARTIN RUSH STROBE 15X5

BLING BLING

BY JIMMY DEN-OUDEM



RUSH BY MARTIN IS A NEW RANGE OF COMPACT FIXTURES DESIGNED TO SUIT THE NIGHTCLUB MARKET – BOTH IN FORM, FACTOR AND PRICE. RUSH STROBE 15X5 IS A 5X5 WHITE LED STROBE / BLINDER PANEL, MEASURING 500X500MM AND TIPPING THE SCALES AT 9.5KG. EACH SEGMENT IS DRIVEN BY A 5W CREE COOL WHITE SOURCE, AND LED LIFETIME IS SPECIFIED AT >50000 HOURS TO 70% LUMINOUS OUTPUT.

Multiple units can be physically joined together to form a panel of up to 5x5 strobes – so you could effectively pixel map on a 25x25 pixel screen if you really wanted to. The joining mechanism is a simple, hex key operation. Power goes in and loops out on Neutrik PowerCon connectors, and the same applies for DMX on both 3 and 5 pin XLR. The fixture setup is done via 4 character 7 segment LED menu with menu, up, down and enter buttons. The menu is as good as such a thing can ever be - setting the DMX address is simple but some of the other options are a bit cryptic. With a stated typical power consumption of 148W, you could comfortably hang a dozen units off a single 10A circuit (leaving some headroom).

Control of the RUSH Strobe 1 5x5 is via 4, 25 or 29 DMX channels. Each of these modes does different things, with the four channel mode giving you access to strobe and

blinder functionality, letters, and a host of pre-programmed sequences. The quickest way to get multiple units up and running is to address them all the same and use four channel mode – doing this, the sequences seem to match up pretty well and stay in sync. This is a great option for use in a nightclub, since it makes driving the thing about as simple as can be. You've got a channel for mode, a channel for pattern selection, one for intensity, and another which controls ramp rates.

The internal patterns include lines, diamonds, and swirly things. Of course if you want to treat the fixture as 25 individual cells that's fine too – just use a higher channel count mode and give each fixture individual addresses. This opens up the option for writing words, and even basic chunky pixel mapping.

Martin has had great success over the years with the Atomic 3000 strobe – it seems to have become the go to



standard for strobes, and rightly so; it's a great unit. The RUSH Strobe 1 5x5 is a different kind of thing. Single elements used alone carry all the impact of, well, a 5W LED. It's certainly enough output if you're drawing patterns and animations and such, but it's not really high impact as a blinder. Turning on all the cells at once (ie; using the strobe function) packs a lot more punch. I put two panels on in strobe mode for one of my erstwhile colleagues to see what he thought, and he nearly fell over. If you're after a little subtlety, it is of course possible to run at less than full tilt. Dimming seems smooth and I didn't perceive any flicker to the eye.

An interesting thing about LEDs is that as humans we have a thing called persistence of vision. This means we see an LED as being on for longer than it actually is. I put it down to POV that even when strobing at high frequency, it kind of almost looks like the cells have a soft off.

Used singly on a large stage I think the RUSH Strobe 1 5x5 would look a little forlorn, but several units hanging off a few truss uprights would be pretty good. Since the beam is very wide (think flood), you'd have to consider what



else you're lighting up. Building a massive wall of these in a nightclub would really be the ultimate – strobe that thing all at full and the impact would be huge. I think that's where it's at too – RUSH is designed for clubs, and in this situation it will be right at home.

BRAND: MARTIN
 MODEL: RUSH STROBE 1 5x5
 RRP: \$2199 INC GST
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SHURE GLX-D

DIGITAL WIRELESS FOR THE EVERYDAY PUNTER

BY JIMMY DEN-ODEN



WE'VE SEEN A LOT OF REALLY NICE HIGH-END WIRELESS KIT IN RECENT TIMES, BUT REALITY IS THAT FOR THE HARDWORKING MUSO AND SMALLER DRIVEWAY HIRE BUSINESS, HIGH END KIT CAN BE HARD TO AFFORD OR JUSTIFY. SOMETIMES A SIMPLER SOLUTION IS CALLED FOR, AND GLX-D EXISTS TO SERVE THIS NEED. THINK OF IT AS "EVERYDAY 2.4G WIRELESS".

It seems to me that the GLX-D systems are really targeted at the musician / MI market. They don't require a lot of configuration to use, and because 2.4GHz is globally unlicensed the systems can be used anywhere in the world. Our test kit came with an auto-ranging power supply which is good from 100-240V.

The GLX-D range encompasses four main products - two receivers and two transmitters, each with a range of mic options. The GLXD2 handheld transmitter feels kind of like a UR series, albeit with a plastic handle. The transmitter has a sliding on switch, and under the battery cover there's a "link" button and a mini USB port. The same controls and functions are found on the GLXD1 bodypack transmitter.

The USB port on the transmitters is interesting, in that it's used for charging the internal Li-Ion battery – there are mains and even car charger options available. The battery can also be charged by inserting it into the GLXD4 receiver unit, and is good for up to a phenomenal 16 hours on a full charge.

The GLXD4 tabletop receiver can't be rack-mounted, but that's not really the intention of this kit. The back panel has an XLR mic out, and a 6.5mm instrument output, plus power switch and locking DC connector. The front panel has a backlit LCD which shows channel info, battery life remaining and AF plus gain setting. Because the system has two-way communication to the transmitter, it's smart enough to update frequencies on both simultaneously if you change channels with the transmitter turned on. You can manually link pairs through a process of holding down link buttons, and a quick press on the link button of either unit causes its counterpart to flash for easy identification. Really cool.

GLX-D is claimed to have 60m range which seems pretty reasonable, and you can simultaneously use up to 8 systems – more than enough for most acts. The GLXD6 receiver looks like a guitar tuner, and indeed it works as one too. It can be powered from a range of voltages, the idea being you use the power supply already on the guitar pedal board to



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NORE BATTERY SLIDES INTO GLXD4 TO CHARGE



"USB MIC?
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run the thing. It adds stroboscopic and needle tuners, and you can choose whether you want to mute the output when the tuner is activated. The matching bodypack transmitter can be paired up with a headset, lavalier or instrument mic, or you can just plug it directly into a guitar. The handheld transmitter has four capsule choices - SM58, Beta 58, SM86 or Beta87. I used the Beta 58, it sounded predictably good.

The transmitters can be power locked, and the front panel receiver buttons can also be locked. Unlike conventional systems, all locking operations are performed from the receiver, so you can lock the thing even after you've handed it over to a performer or speaker. This feature is most excellent. The whole system is excellent really - it's simple to use and does what it's supposed to. This and the lack of licensing requirement make it a winner for musicians, entry and pro level users alike.

BRAND: SHURE
 MODEL: GLX-D DIGITAL WIRELESS SYSTEMS
 RRP: SYSTEMS START AT \$899.00 INC
 GST FOR A GLXD4 RX AND
 GLXD2 TX WITH SM58 HEAD
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.SHURE.COM
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.JANDS.COM.AU



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ROBE MINIME

DO YOU COMPLETE ME?

BY JIMMY DEN-ouden



MINIME IS PERHAPS THE CUTEST FIXTURE ROBE HAS EVER PRODUCED – AND THAT’S BEFORE YOU SWITCH IT ON. AFTER YOU SWITCH IT ON, YOU REALIZE THERE’S A BIT MORE GOING ON UNDER THE HOOD THAN INITIALLY EXPECTED – AT LEAST THAT WAS MY EXPERIENCE.

MiniMe is a 450/270 degree pan/tilt moving head fixture with an RGB LED lightsource rated to 20,000 hours lifespan. So it’s an LED moving light right? Wrong – it’s a projector. It runs from an internal Raspberry Pi media server with a Linux OS and 512Mb RAM. Power in and loop are on PowerCon, and with dual 5 pin XLR for DMX and an EtherCon for ArtNet connection. There are also a pair of USB ports.

MiniMe can project graphics and video from its internal engine, as well as images and video imported to the unit via USB. There’s also an HDMI port which allows you to feed live video directly into the unit. Light output is 300 ANSI Lumens, which struck me as kind of low until I realized there’s nothing out there like MiniMe, so I had no basis for

comparison. The target market for the product is bars, clubs and retail applications, and in those applications it would probably suffice.

Getting the MiniMe up and running wasn’t as simple as I imagined, in fact it took me over an hour to get it to actually output light. Granted most of this was spent re-writing a fixture profile for my console – and that was just a basic profile. MiniMe uses some 24 control channels, and you need to send values to most of these to get output. There’s no short-form protocol which is a bit of a shame.

The internal graphics engine has a range of monochrome gobo patterns as well as colour graphics and some colour animations. You can adjust replay speed of these, and rotate / digitally zoom the images. If you’d prefer to use your own images or video, that’s okay too. You need a USB drive formatted in a special manner, but the fixture can actually perform this operation itself. Internal media is copied to the fixture’s internal memory, while external media plays directly off the stick. Fixture software upgrades are also performed via the USB port.



MiniMe projects 16:10 images at WXGA (1280x800) resolution, and at 16 degrees the beam angle is really tight. 3.5m throw distance yields a projected area 1m wide – but remember that not all the graphics will fill this entire space. In addition to the graphics, there is a range of colour effects which are selected via a different DMX channel. The narrow lens seems about right for projecting from ceiling height in a retail space onto the floor, or nearby wall. Horizontal and Vertical keystone adjustments let you shape the image to account for off-axis projection distortion.

Perhaps indicative of the intended market, MiniMe can have programs recorded into it then replayed without the need for a permanent external controller. That's really what you want in situations where the product is going to be permanently installed. As I played with the unit, my mind was cast back to some years ago walking down Chapel St in South Yarra. I went into a clothing store, which had

one solitary moving light mounted on the ceiling. The poor thing was displaying every error code in the book, and the meager lamp output was an unhealthy green. It just made the store look tired and sad, and even less justified in charging \$100 plus for a singlet. Something like MiniMe in the same application would have enhanced the look of the store, and likely wouldn't have suffered the same faults. Because the graphics are digitally generated this means fewer moving parts, which for my mind is more to like.

BRAND: ROBE
 MODEL: MINIME
 RRP: \$7079.00 INC. GST
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.ROBE.CZ
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.ULAGROUP.COM



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Roland

GEFEN DIGITAL SIGNAGE PLAYER WITH Wi-Fi

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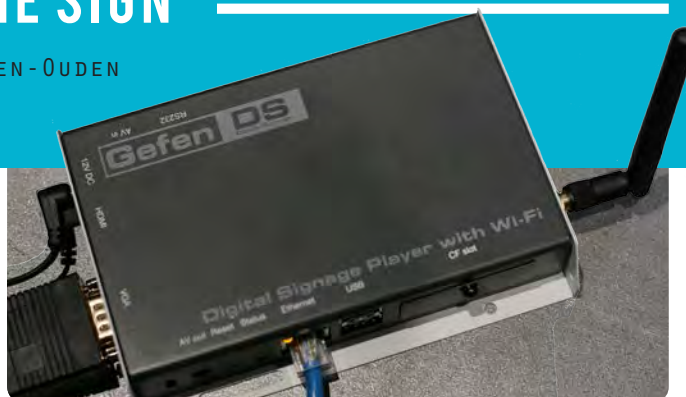
BY JIMMY DEN-OUDEM

DIGITAL SIGNAGE IS BECOMING POPULAR. FLAT PANELS ARE CHEAP, AND DYNAMIC CONTENT IS INTERESTING TO PASSERS BY, AND AFFORDS ADVERTISERS A NEW OUTLET THROUGH WHICH TO CONVEY THEIR MESSAGE. EVEN IF THE MESSAGE IS "TUESDAY NIGHT SCHNITZEL MADNESS IN THE BUFFET!". I DIGRESS. A COUPLE OF THINGS ARE IMPORTANT WITH DIGITAL SIGNAGE. FIRST UP THE CONTENT DELIVERY SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE COMPACT AND EASY TO INSTALL. GETTING THE UNIT INSTALLED IS ONE BATTLE, BUT KEEPING THE CONTENT RELEVANT AND UP TO DATE IS ANOTHER. SO AN EASY WAY TO UPDATE CONTENT IS A PREREQUISITE FOR A GOOD PLAYER.

The Gefen Digital Signage Player with WiFi is a compact little device which sits a mere 30mm or so high. It's pretty well exactly the right size to fit nicely on a wall behind a flat panel display, most mounting brackets for which tend to sit the display off the wall a bit. The player is plainly designed for installation, with loads of mounting points on the extruded section of the chassis. There's a Kensington lock slot in case you're really concerned about theft.

The setup instructions for the hardware are insightful if a little obvious. Plug the included power supply into the DC input connector, plug the monitor into the HDMI or VGA port, and connect the Ethernet cable (unless you're using wireless, in which case don't connect the Ethernet cable). If you need audio output (it supports stereo output on RCA via TRRS jack, which also provides composite output) then connect that up too. Basic setup of the unit is done by plugging in a USB keyboard to one of the two ports – as soon as you do this the unit jumps into a very MS-DOS looking configuration screen. Here you can do things like connect to a wireless network and adjust screen output resolution. Once you're done, hit save to exit, then unplug the keyboard.

The software setup is remarkably simple and straightforward if you use the supplied install DVD, and more difficult if you download the software from the web. There's a lesson in that – the box comes with the correct software included! I initially had some difficulty connecting



to the unit over IP, but a tap on the reset button sorted things out. You can set a password on the player to prevent rogue operators (who've somehow managed to get hold of the right bit of software) from uploading content to your screens.

The Signage Manager Express software is quite intuitive to use. Choose your screen orientation and aspect ratio, choose a screen layout, then drag and drop content. You can choose to trim clips and graphics to maintain correct aspect ratio (thanks Gefen!), and you can set durations for all the content. In addition to video, graphics and text files you can also use "widgets", which let you display things like the current time, date, and news. Once you're happy with the layout and timing of everything, save it then hit export. Choose the player you want to send the content to and hit export again. Transfers happen pretty quickly, and the unit just begins playing when it's done. I like that the unit recognizes content already held within itself and doesn't waste time re-uploading a duplicate. Another good feature is that if you want to avoid the whole networking side of things, you can export your content from the Signage Manager Express software onto a USB stick. Then it's just a matter of plugging the stick into the box and waiting till it says it's okay to remove.

So the final thing is really to address how well it works. It works very well on the whole. Video playback is good, and it's accommodating of a number of different file types. I threw a bunch of different format graphics and the like at it and everything worked. Picture quality is very nice, save for the odd "stutter" on text when you're running a crawl – yet oddly the news ticker displays beautifully smoothly. About the worst I can say is some of the colours the software chooses for widgets are a bit "hospital waiting room" themed. The only other downside is that generating video content to suit the custom layout box sizes carries with it some challenges, but it's definitely do-able. All in all, the Gefen box does what it's supposed to, and once you figure out the initial network idiosyncrasy it seems very reliable.

BRAND: GEFEN
 MODEL: DIGITAL SIGNAGE
 PLAYER WITH WI-FI
 RRP: \$1099 INC GST
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.GEFEN.COM
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.AMBERTECH.COM.AU



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Dance with De Vil



Sydney Fringe is an independent festival celebrating visual and performing arts, encompassing a range of disciplines across a number of venues. In stark contrast to the arena scale shows on which we here at CX so often report, Fringe shows are held in comparatively small venues. One such venue is the Old Fitzroy Theatre in Woolloomooloo, where I found myself in attendance of the Fringe show “Dance with De Vil”.

I don't get out to Woolloomooloo very frequently, its proximity to Kings Cross being something of a deterrent and the difficult parking arrangements being another. Anyhow, since I was there I figured I should embrace the moment, so before the show I headed up to Una's in the Cross, who do a wicked schnitzel and a pretty good Stigl Goldbrau to match it. Hunger sated, I headed for the Old Fitz. I was greeted in the street along the way by a bearded chap who offered me a glass. Or possibly to glass me? Somewhat uncertain, I politely declined and hastened toward the theatre.

Fitz is attached to the adjacent pub which has a nice little bar and a bistro kitchen, which though smelling a bit ominous, seemed to keep the punters happy. The downstairs gambling lounge has 13 pokies and a decrepit flower arrangement within a perspex fronted case. The place certainly has character. The theatre is small and purposeful – a black box with tiered seating for 60. Old timber beams support a pitched roof, as well as a number of various lighting bars.

“Dance with De Vil” is written by Jared Jekyll and Brendan Hay, who also plays the lead role of Cruello De Vil. After spending some 22 years locked in the dungeons of Hell Hall, Cruello, son of infamous fashionista Cruella De Vil, emerges into society. The show is a narrative of the years preceding

BY JIMMY DEN-UDEN

this, told in a mixture of dialogue and song. Hay sings, accompanied ably by Benjamin Kiehne on piano – a baby grand brought into the venue just for the show. Kristina McNamara (Cover: Jackie Bowker) and Mikayla Williams round out the cast as henchwomen. The show initially takes on the form of a police style interview, but is rapidly overtaken by Cruello's larger than life persona, played to a fault by Hay.

You might have noticed a distinct lack of tech info thus far. So here's the run-down: The house rig is a ramshackle assortment of profiles, cans and fresnels with a few very old Selecon Cyc lights in the mix. 24 dimmer channels are driven by a baby LSC console. Audio is a couple of little powered boxes and a four channel Behringer console.

During the show an 55SH is used by Hay for several of the songs, and a PG48 briefly appears during an audience interaction segment. That's it for audio. Lighting design & operation was by Elliot Glass, who shared the rig with another show running concurrently in the venue. Glass used a mixture of open white, a few basic primary colours, and CT blue in the rig.

You may have noticed that this really isn't a story about techy stuff, but more about reminding us why we do what we do. With so much technology available to us that it's really easy to lose sight of what we're there to do. I went to see one of my favourite electronic acts a few years back, and left after 20 mins because I was so annoyed that I couldn't actually see the people on stage – the whole show was backlit

with strobes. What the hell? Our goal should ultimately be to support what's happening on stage with sensitive technical production – not to distract the audience. As far as I know, nobody has ever gone home humming the light show.

I see a lot of shows. Some of them are really fancy, with huge budgets, semi-trailers of stuff, layers of production management, and dozens of crew. Truly they're awesome. I loved Lion King, and Hairspray, and (somewhat surprisingly) the Pink concert.

All that stuff's great, yet on this night I found just as much enjoyment in a technically simple, low budget, "loaded out in a Nissan Pulsar" show in a tiny venue. I think the moral here is that it doesn't matter how much production you hang off it, solid content and able performers go a long way to making a good show.



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Concert AV production & installation from Melbourne's Wild West

Concert AV are a thriving young production and installation company servicing everything from school shows to major NCE celebrations all over Melbourne. Their head office is in Maidstone, just near Highpoint, from which Director Joe Sofo looks after their Western heartland and plans for the future. Jason Allen sat down with Joe to talk business, staffing and how DJs get a bad rap...

PICTURED - JOE SOFO

At just 31 years of age, Joe Sofo had achieved more than some do in a lifetime. He started drumming and DJing at 13, was employing people at 15, started hiring out gear at 18, got a degree from RMIT in Human Movement Science and now runs Concert AV as well as his own successful DJ career with partner Kath. How are there enough hours in a day? "I'm sponsored by V and Red Bull!" joked Joe, before we got down to the serious business of how to get ahead in a tough market.

It's hard work

Joe's work ethic comes inherited from his Italian roots. "My parents taught me that you should work as hard as you can when you're young, and when you're old, you'll reap the benefits", explained Joe. "I'm still waiting for the benefits, but I'm not old yet!"

Concert AV has its roots in Joe's early DJ and fitness careers. Between the ages of 18 and 22, Joe was a personal trainer and managed gyms as well as doing AV on the side. Both aspects of his working life became busier and busier, and he was forced to decide which way his passions lay. Audio and lighting won.

Service, service, service

The first venue Joe fitted out and serviced was a now-defunct nightclub in Carlton's Lygon Street. "It was through some DJ friends" recalled Joe. "I based my business profile on giving really good service along with the products. We gave them a free 24 hour call-out service and free regular upgrades on all the equipment. They were really happy because they were looked after and were being constantly upgraded. It was the service they really enjoyed. And that's been our philosophy from the word go."

BY JASON ALLEN



installs, they've also recently completed The Howler, Brunswick's latest hip, arty warehouse conversion. The live music scene cool of Carlton's John Curtin Bandroom was also their work, with a solid HK Audio system powering a constant roster of indie bands.

Concert AV Showroom

Joe's work as a DJ and drummer gave him access to a broad network in both the live music and nightclub scenes. Building a solid reputation for service in both areas, Concert AV grew and is now 8 years old. Its customer base has extended out from its western suburbs heartland right across Melbourne.

"We have a large customer base Berwick-Dandenong way" said Joe. "A lot of our business comes from word of mouth. You do one event or installation and it stems from there. We do a lot of theatre installations and school productions, and especially within the school market, the teachers talk to each other and recommend you."

Concert AV has struck a nice balance between regular live production work and quality installations. Repeat production customers include the Latin Festival at Sandown Race track that draws over 10,000 people annually, and the hot-ticket Riva NYE celebrations at the beachside pavilion in Elwood. Along with bread-and-butter school and theatre

Coherency with Cohedra

HK Audio has become a brand of choice for Joe, with their inventory packing enough HK Cohedra line array to cover Festival Hall. I asked Joe why he chose HK Cohedra in a mid-sized line array market that's spoiled for choice. "There's a lot of choice in that market, and we ummed and aahed for about a year" explained Joe "I went out and listened to all of them, as well as rigging them. The labour cost in rigging is important, for both ourselves and hiring to a customer."

"There were a lot of others that were bigger and louder, but not as versatile as the HK" he continued "We can go into a small corporate event without the boxes looking grotesque and oversize, but also do a medium sized outdoor festival because the throw is incredible. Bang for size, I haven't heard anything that has the throw and coherency of the Cohedra. We've run them lengthways down a football field and the sound at the other end is amazing, even at that distance".

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Concert AV Showroom



Strength from diversification

This opportunity marked Concert AV's entry into retail sales proper, adding a show room and all of the back-end that goes with it. "I hate to turn away business!" laughed Joe. "In our hire installations, we were always having people want to buy some of the equipment, and we were never really competitive enough in sales to do it. To be competitive you've got to be turning over a lot of product and be buying from the right suppliers at the right price. So we had to look at getting retail accounts and selling the right amount of the products."

"It's allowed us to have higher turnover, therefore secured us better pricing and, in turn, our customers." Joe emphasised. "It's what really made us the one-stop-shop. We now do staging, rigging, lighting, audio, marquee systems and ground support structures. If you want to run a festival, you can get everything from us."

The competition in the backyard

One of the more common complaints you hear in the mid-sized install and production markets is cost pressure from competitors who are seen to have little or no overhead. Call them The Boot Slammers or The Backyarders, they're a group that most will complain about. But Joe has a tendency to see opportunity instead of problems. "I can always relate to people when they complain about backyarders" concedes Joe "but that's another reason we went into retail sales; they can't buy from the suppliers. So we spent time finding out who these people are, befriending them and saying 'OK, if you're going to be a player in the market, why not crosshire or purchase your gear from us?' We reward people who look after us."

There's a healthy sense of realism and generosity in Joe's attitude. "This is a massive, massive industry" Joe pointed out. "While there's a lot of players, there's enough work to go around. There's plenty of competition, but once a customer comes to you, if you provide the right service, they won't have a reason to go somewhere else. Customer

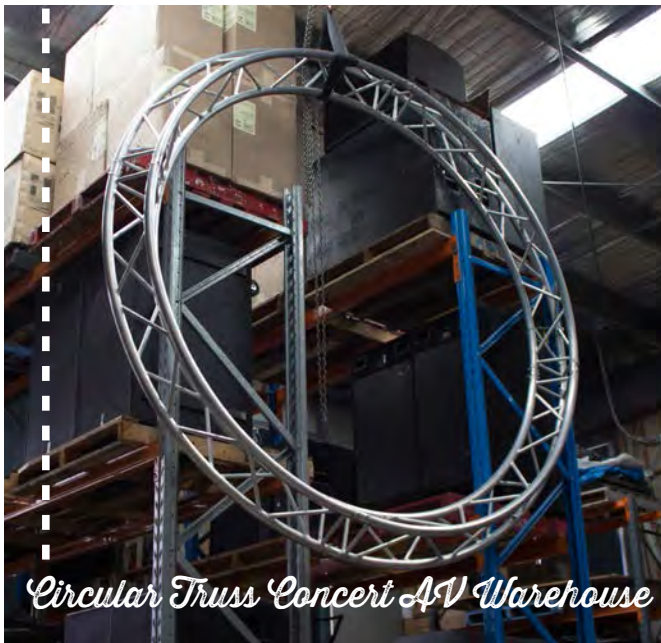


Concert AV Warehouse with Joe Sofo

Light it up

Concert AV is now positioning itself as a one stop shop for production. "We now stock a hire inventory of over \$4 million, which I never thought we'd do" said Joe. Lighting stock includes 160 moving heads from brands such as Martin and Robe. Joe's also importing a range of affordable fixtures including Beam 200s and LED parcans Joe sourced from China under the moniker Concert Series.

"I go over to China once a year" explained Joe. "I originally went over to see the technology that was coming out, but then I started seeing where the gaps in the market were. In a five colour RGBWA, there was a gap in the market. There's your really good stuff from the high end manufacturers at \$1,500 to \$2,000 per light, but nothing in that power in the middle of the price range. When the Clay Paky Sharpys came out, that's what everybody wanted, but there wasn't an economical version. There were plenty of copies, but not a good reliable economic version. So we started producing those. They've been the most hired-out unit in our inventory".



Circular Truss Concert AV Warehouse

retention is one of the biggest things we focus on. The bottom line is we don't lose customers. Over the years we've built up a solid base".

Separating the wheat from the chaff

Concert AV now employs six full time staff and 12 regular subcontractors. With "talent" recruitment and retention being a difficult job, I asked Joe what the secret was to finding and keeping good staff. "If you find out, let me know!" he joked. "We have a good core of full timers and subcontractors, but it's taken a long time to get there". Joe has managed to attract his skilled crew from a variety of avenues. "We have a lot of schoolkids who do work experience here because they we work on a lot of schools shows. Two of my full timers came up that way." The passion people have for the industry is also a big lure. "I've had guys doing factory jobs for upwards of \$40 an hour and then come over to our industry for almost a 50% pay cut. They do it because they want to be here."

The next level

With a healthy customer base and an expanding warehouse, I asked Joe where he wanted to take the company from here. "Our next step is the international touring market" stated Joe definitively. "While we've done many multicultural international artists, we haven't yet broken into the mainstream international market." This move will see Concert AV starting to move up against the larger production companies into the next bracket in the market. Joe is more than ready for this, and is already bidding on tours.

Based on Joe's seemingly limitless energy, Concert AV are likely to become a major force in the touring market "I started at 8 this morning" Joe said "I'll finish at 6, start DJing at 8 and finish at 4 AM tomorrow morning. I'll be back at work tomorrow. If my staff see me working hard, they've got no excuse because I'm older than all of them!" As boss, is he willing to make any concessions now he's in his 30s? "10 years later, I'm still doing the load-ins, but I'm starting to step back from the late load-outs."



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ROAD SKILLS

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FBI radio
festival

BY CAT STROM

BERNARD FANNING PHOTOGRAPHER - Marc Grimwade
BACKSTREET BOYS PHOTOGRAPHER - Daniel Mercer
FBI RADIO FESTIVAL PHOTOGRAPHER - Troy Constable



BERNARD FANNING HAS BEEN TOURING THE COUNTRY IN SUPPORT OF HIS NEW ALBUM DEPARTURES. AFTER BERNARD'S AND POWDERFINGER'S LONG-TIME FOH GUY HAD A MOMENT OF CLARITY AND LEFT THE INDUSTRY TO WORK IN THE MINES, DYLAN RANSOM-HUGHES (THE DANDY WARHOLS) WAS BROUGHT IN.

The Departures tour used a mixed bag of audio including house PA's and gear from Norwest Productions. However Dylan did manage to tour with one constant in the form of a Digidesign Profile console which he described as the best for the job.

"A Midas H3000 (an analogue console) would be my all-time favourite, but for ease of reproducing a consistent sound on tour, digital can be much better," he said. "The Digidesign Profile is the only digital console I can do a dub mix on, because it allows me to use eight auxiliaries at once." Dylan utilized only onboard effects although he describes mixing for Bernard as fairly straightforward, ballad rock'n'roll requiring little in the way of effects.

"Bernard has a very pleasant, mid-range voice which you have to tame a little," explained Dylan.



DYLAN RANSOM - HUGHES



BERNARD FANNING

"I don't have any Waves, so where I would've used something like the C4 multiband compressor, I faked it a bit using the onboard compressor, using the key-in to compress the nasally area. Then I'd run a B76 over his voice compressing the whole signal again."

Fanning's management brought in a L'Acoustics Kudo PA when necessary. "At some gigs we had to do a ground stack and a 'point and shoot' box would have been better but we didn't have the budget to get a PA to suit every room," said Dylan. "The Townsville venue was crazy; a real rock pub with pillars everywhere. We decided to lie the line array on its' side, putting as many boxes in as we could and it worked. I have to say the Kudo sounds quite good on its side!" A mixture of fairly standard Shure, AKG and Sennheiser microphones and Radial DIs was supplied by monitor engineer, Stephen Brown (aka Browny).

"I'm more of a less is more person but Stephen is the opposite," laughed Dylan. "I think he wanted more microphones than the FOH guy, which is weird. I prefer a simpler approach."

Stephen was running an AVID SC48 console, as well as Nexo PS15 monitors and a L'Acoustics DV18 drum sub. Anita's Theatre in Wollongong proved to be the trickiest gig on the tour. Dylan explained that the venue's acoustics, with lots of angles above the stage, made balancing the FOH mix with the delayed stage mix a real challenge.

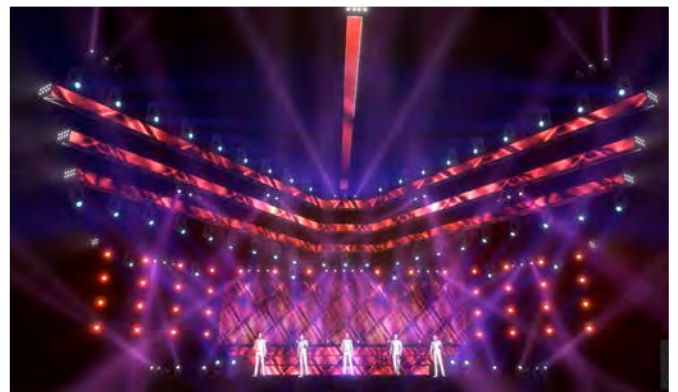
"In my opinion the room, which is a potentially great new venue for Wollongong, needs acoustic treatment," he said. Kuranda Ampitheatre was another memorable gig. "Unfortunately, logistics allowed only six Kudos per side, which made me worry for the volume likely to be heard by people at the top of the hill. But we turned it up and angled it as much as we could and almost covered the entire area."

Dylan is preparing for a run of winery shows with Bernard Fanning using a JPJ Audio supplied rig including d&b audiotechnik PA.



BACKSTREET BOYS

BIG ON MANDYLIGHTS



MOVE OVER ONE DIRECTION, THE ORIGINAL AND WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL BOY BAND EVER IS BACK! THE BACKSTREET BOYS, COMPRISING OF NICK CARTER, BRIAN LITRELL, AJ MCLEAN, HOWIE DOROUGH AND KEVIN RICHARDSON, ROSE TO FAME IN THE 1990'S WITH THEIR DEBUT INTERNATIONAL ALBUM IMAGINATIVELY ENTITLED BACKSTREET BOYS.

The 'In a World Like This' Tour celebrates the band's 20th Anniversary with the show made up of a huge collection of Backstreet's current and previous hits, including songs that the band authored themselves from their new *In a World Like This* album.

Lighting for the tour is delivered by Sydney-based Mandylights even though there is no confirmation yet of the tour coming to Australia. So just how did they get the job?

"The stage design is by Bruce Rodgers of Tribe Design Inc. in New York and we've recently worked on a couple of gigs with him," explained Richard Neville, director of Mandylights. "We get on very well and he asked if we would be involved. It helped that the tour started in China and Bruce knew we had a lot of experience working there. Furthermore, about two thirds of our work now is

outside of Australia, so our recent portfolio of international work came into play as well.”

For production rehearsals and the first few dates in China, Mandylights turned out in force to ensure a smooth start to the tour: Richard Neville as lighting designer, Alex Grierson programming the media, Dan Mercer as lighting head of department and Andrew Hassler in charge of rigging.

That’s the thing with Mandylights, you don’t just get a lighting designer - you get a comprehensive lighting package. Staying with the tour are Alex as lighting tour director, Dan, Andrew and Mandylights’ four PRG MBox Studio Media Servers.

“We delivered an entire lighting end liaising with Chinese suppliers to make sure it all came together,” said Richard. “We also advanced the rigging in the cities ahead to ensure that the rigging was safe especially in some of the obscure venues we were going to perform in.”

Production rehearsals were held in Beijing and were described as ‘interesting’ with Chinese ways of doing things a bit different to what the guys were used to, to put it mildly.

“There’s a big component in checking the safety of gear and checking the integrity of rigging as well as all of the other concerns,” added Richard. “From the start of load in to the first show was only three days so it was an incredibly compressed schedule.”

With no band on stage (the boys sing live to backing tracks) the lighting had to be spectacular and something for the male half of the audience to watch!! The lighting also needed to compliment Bruce’s stage set comprising of heaps of video in the stage and in the rig above.

“It was very much a case of building a lighting design that worked with the angles that Bruce had designed for the stage and then just blowing it out,” Richard remarked. “The brief was for a big arena lighting design. I wanted to do a large wall of wash lights that connected the stage video up to the flown video – basically anywhere we saw black in the original stage design we filled it with light. Hence a wall of

thirty-two GLP impression LED wash lights at the back of the stage.”

Clay Paky Sharpys, in clusters of three, are scattered around the stage providing intense fingers of light. The original creative design called for lines of lights and so there are two big lines of eighteen Vari*lite VL3000 Spots which supply block colour and gobo looks whilst carefully matching the video.

As mentioned, Mandylights supplied media servers for the tour and all media programming using a range of content that was created specifically for the show. Using four of the company’s MBox media servers, the show’s video is triggered from the two grandMA2 light consoles operated by Alex.

“It’s a fun tour to work on,” added Richard. “The boys are really easy to work with and are open to any ideas. It’s rare that you get to go on a show and have a whole heap of fun.”

The tour began in Shanghai, China in May 2013 before an extensive tour of the USA. Currently it’s touring Japan where the band are huge before a stint in Europe and South America. There are rumours the tour may reach Australia next year.





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THE PRESETS



THE PREATURES



ONE OF SYDNEY'S LEADING COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS, FBI RADIO, HAS JUST TURNED TEN AND TO CELEBRATE THEY LINED UP 35 ACTS ACROSS FOUR STAGES FOR A DAY OF FESTIVITIES HELD AT SYDNEY'S CARRIAGEWORKS.

The line-up includes ARIA Award-winning dance music act The Presets, Sarah Blasko, FBi SMAC Award winners Hermitude and Seekae, alongside an array of the best Australian live acts and DJs.

FBi first hit the airwaves in 2003, and since then have stayed true to their word, playing 50 percent Australian music. FBi has been a stalwart of promoting forward thinking music over the past decade and all proceeds from the festival are being turned back into the radio station itself.

Last year, Carriageworks Director Lisa Havilah revealed to the Sydney Morning Herald her ambitions to turn Carriageworks into a live music venue by partnering with FBi radio to host gigs and allowing young producers to curate music.

Through their work on the Laneway Festival who share the same production manager, Entertainment Installations got the contract to supply lighting and audio for the event also supplying fourteen crew on the day. Managing director Neale Mace admits there wasn't much of a brief – just to



MAIN STAGE FROM MONITOR LAND
WITH MATT MADDOCK ON THE CONSOLE

supply suitable lighting and audio for all four stages and keep the off-site noise to a minimum!

With the Carriageworks venue situated slap bang in the middle of a highly populated residential area, the main concern was audio control on the Main Stage that was outdoors. Entertainment Installations' challenge was to create a viable solution that effectively communicates artistic values and remains acceptable with local authorities, council and the community. Fortunately Entertainment Installations has extensive experience in outdoor event applications, and providing controlled sound quality, plus with the new Martin Audio MLA Compact PA in their inventory they had the right PA for the job.

"The EPA guy onsite sent me an email after the event saying how well the event went and that they had very few complaints regarding off site noise," added Neale. "For a festival running all day in an urban area with 8,000 people in attendance, that's pretty good."

When first working on the planning of the festival there were no band specifications available and so Neale had to throw a generic spec at them which he then massaged into place as he received specific information from the bands. "We didn't get to do a site inspection and had to rely on information given to us by the festival production manager, which was all correct," commented Neale. "It was an interesting gig given that the indoor part is a maze of rooms but it's quite well appointed for this type of event. There's lots of power and trusses in the roof on motors and chain blocks etc. It may look half derelict but it has all the infrastructure in place. The Hip Hop room in particular had multiple trusses in the roof that were on rolling beams. Even the outdoor stage wasn't a difficult area to work in, you could get the semi-trailer in there. In fact all of our trucks could fit into the corridors to the stages which was handy."

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CHRIS DURRANT
LIGHTING RIGGER
AND OP ON THE
INDIE STAGE



THUNDAMENTALS

The 9m outdoors Main Stage, situated between two buildings, utilized Entertainment Installations' Martin MLA Compact PA, flown off the stage roof structure in a standard left / right configuration with eight mid-highs a side and four subs a side plus some stacked Martin Audio W8LC boxes for front fill.

"The MLA performed well all day and any engineers who hadn't mixed on one before were suitably impressed," added Neale. "The Presets sounded amazing through it. It did as we expected; provided a big sound from a little package and didn't cause any problems off site."

An Avid Profile console was used for mixing FOH whilst a Yamaha PM5D took care of monitors. Also in monitor world were EV Xw15 active foldback wedges as well as Dynacord Madras powered drumfills and Dynacord Cobra sidefills. Lighting for the Main Stage comprised of 1K fresnels, molefay 4-lites, Martin MAC700 Profiles and MAC301 LED Washes, Pro Shop Honeycomb72 LED bars, Atomic Strobes with scrollers, and Unique Hazers, all controlled by a Road Hog Full Boar with a wing.

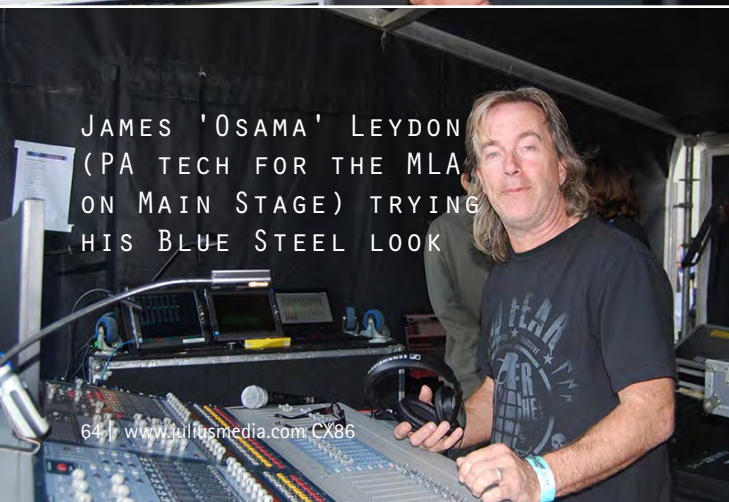
"The Presets' lighting guy Matthew Griffith emailed me afterwards to say that we'd done a great job and everything was as it was supposed to be; something he's not used to at other festivals as normally there are all sorts of dramas with lighting on site," said a pleased Neale.



DAN LIA PA GUY
AND FOH OP ON
THE DANCE STAGE



SARAH BLASKO



JAMES 'OSAMA' LEYDON
(PA TECH FOR THE MLA
ON MAIN STAGE) TRYING
HIS BLUE STEEL LOOK



MATT KAPPERT LIGHTING OP
ON THE DANCE STAGE



MIDNIGHT
JUGGERNAUTS



BRYCE AND
NEALE MACE,
FOH MAIN STAGE



DAVE HENDERSON, PA TECH FOR THE
INDIE STAGE KEEPS AN EYE ON THE
VISITING ENGINEER MIXING ON A
PROFILE



Inside one of the cavernous rooms was the 7m Hip Hop Stage with a ground stacked Martin Audio W8 PA and Martin Audio WSX subs and a side stage mix position for the Avid Venue SC48 console. The stage catered to both bands and DJ's with one act requiring ten wireless microphones! Clay Paky Sharpys dominated the rest of the lighting which was mainly LED - MAC101's and MAC301's - with some Atomic Strobes too. Lighting was controlled side of stage with a MA Lighting grandMA2 light.

The Dance Stage, again indoors but smaller than the Hip Hop Stage, catered to DJ's and had a Dynacord Cobra-4 PA with a side mix with a Yamaha LS9/32. Lighting was by Martin MAC101's and MAC250 Entours plus Atomic Strobes and Unique Hazers. Control was by a Jands HOG1000. Bay 25 was home to the Indie Stage using a ground stacked Martin Audio W8LC line array with Martin WS218X subs and an Avid Profile for control. Monitors included Martin LE1200 wedges and a Yamaha M7CL/48. Lighting was by Martin MAC301's, Atomic Strobes and Unique Hazers controlled by a grandMA2 light.

"It certainly was a successful festival for FBi as it was sold out," said Neale. "They fulfilled their brief for the DA keeping to their noise level and my understanding is that the powers that be in the inner Sydney city area are trying to bring live music back into the city. Carriageworks are very keen to have their venue used for that and it's certainly a quirky festival site. It was interesting being in an urban site rather than a field, and with much of it under cover it's a safer bet with weather. I'd be more than happy to work there again. The only thing I would change was the Main Stage - I'd ask them to erect scaffold towers so we could fly the PA higher which would result in even better off site noise."

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WHAT-IF?

What If my hoist has a higher Safety Factor than my Shackle?

Our last article finished up with “hopefully this will help to bust a bit of a Staging Myth” and it appears that there are quite a few myths out there that need a bit of busting, so for the next few articles we’ll take a look at some of these.

The issue of Safety Factors of hoists and the rigging that hangs those hoists seemed to be a topic of some confusion and misconceptions when a straw poll was taken, so this seems to be a good place to start.

The question that was asked was “If I want to hang a chain hoist with a Rated Lifting Capacity of 500kg and a chain Factor of Safety of 10:1, what size shackle do we need to use to maintain the 10:1 Factor of Safety??”

A surprisingly high number of people responded with “5T”, on the basis that the hoist is 500kg and the Safety Factor needs to be 10:1 (and apparently, $500 \times 10 = 5,000$).

An equally high number of people responded with 1T, on the basis that it is a 1/2 T hoist and the “normal” factor of safety is 5:1

The correct answer, of course, is “it depends” (isn’t that ALWAYS the answer??)...

Rated lifting shackles (and you should NEVER use a commercial grade shackle that is not “rated”) are stamped or indelibly marked with a rated capacity. This rated capacity is

what they can lift, NOT what they will fail at.

Knowing (or being able to deduce) the minimum load that a shackle will fail at is necessary to calculate the Factor of Safety when using the shackle.

Shackles have a Safety Factor designed in to their rated lifting capacity, and depending on the type of shackle, this Factor is usually (but not always) 5:1 or 6:1. Data sheets for your shackle will (should) state the Safety Factor that forms part of the Rated Load. If this is not readily available, we suggest you use 4:1 (to be conservative).

So what is the correct answer to the 10:1 500kg hoist question??

Firstly, calculate the TOTAL load on the shackle: Rated Hoist Capacity + Dynamic Loading + Hoist Self Weight. Unless you KNOW what the hoist dynamic loading factor is, use 1.25 for 4m/min hoists and 1.4 for 8m/min.

So if the hoist and chain weigh a total of 75kg, the total load is $500 \times 1.25 + 75 = 700\text{kg}$.

To maintain 10:1 Factor of Safety, you need a shackle that will fail ABOVE 7,000kg.

This means >1167kg (6:1 Safety Factor Shackle) or >1400kg (5:1 Safety Factor Shackle), or, rounding that UP to the next commercially available size, use a 1.5T shackle for a 500kg hoist that is rated 10:1.

More bubbles burst and myths busted next month...

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

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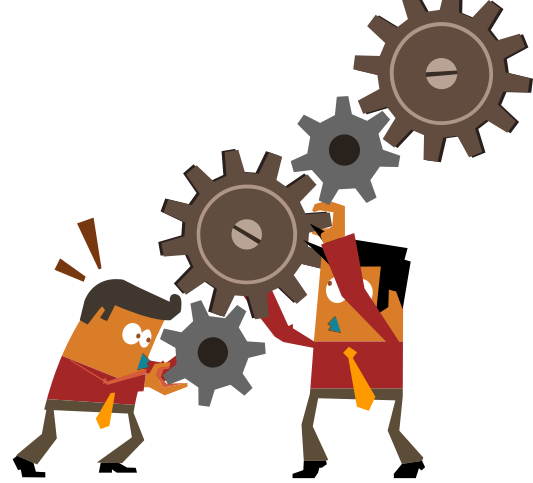


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BIZ TALK

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TRADESHOWS TAKE THE MONEY

Our guest editorial this month by Jason Allen makes the startling yet believable claim that total visitor time spent attending all three trade shows held in Sydney this year was worth \$14,404,000.

Jason says assuming your time is worth \$800 a day, then using the claims of attendance at ENTECH, SMPTE and INTEGATE produces his target number, around fourteen-and-a-half million bucks.

Which had me thinking about the entire cost affect of these shows, all piled into a short timeframe and all gloriously centred on Sydney. We don't know the interstate visitor breakdown, but when I ran ENTECH it was around a third. So take the 18,005 people and divide by three to get 6,002 of you flying in for a day. Add about \$400 each for a flight and a bed in a backpacker hostel and you get \$2,400,800 extra. Most of us spend a lot more, at CX we allow \$700 a day in Australia, which would punch this number well over \$4 million. But we've chosen the low number here.

What about the biggest cost of all – the burden on the exhibitors who fund all this? Assuming what we know, the three shows generated about \$3.5 million in floor space sales, and once built and staffed the cost to exhibitors is at least four times the cost of the floor space. In many cases it is over six times, but we will opt for the low number.

So we have a \$14 million cost for exhibitors, \$14.4 million for your time, and \$2.5 million for your interstate travel. Add on far-too-much money for parking at the soon to be demolished Darling Harbour centre and you get a very freaking big number, well over \$30 million. That's the COST of the three shows, to our industry. All of us.

Seeing that you would then expect to be able to work out a macro value of economic activity across our diverse and niched industry.

If we collectively spent \$30 million, how would we guess the turnover? Start with exhibitors. They have marketing budgets that are around 4% of turnover. Of that 4%, less than half would be tradeshow. Let's be generous and make their \$14 million be 2%. That means they turnover \$700 million.

Now deal with the visitor cost. Assume one visitor attends one tradeshow a year, at the cost of \$800 for the day plus travel if from interstate. Adding travel and time, we get \$16.9 million.

The upshot of all this is that the three trade shows, run commercially for profit (and I include SMPTE as the trade show is owned by a commercial company) require a lot of economic activity to exist.

Clearly there is something wrong here, and we don't think the error lies in our numbers. What do you think? Comment at the blog at cxmagblog.com <http://cxmagblog.com/2013/10/01/tradeshows-take-all-the-money/>

TRADESHOW NUMBERS

COST TO VISITORS	\$14.4 MIL
COST TO EXHIBITORS	\$14.0 MIL
TRAVEL COSTS	\$ 2.4 MIL
TOTAL COST 2013	\$30.4 MIL

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STUFF FOR THE BRAINY TYPES

TRANSFORMER SATURATION IN MIC SPLITTERS

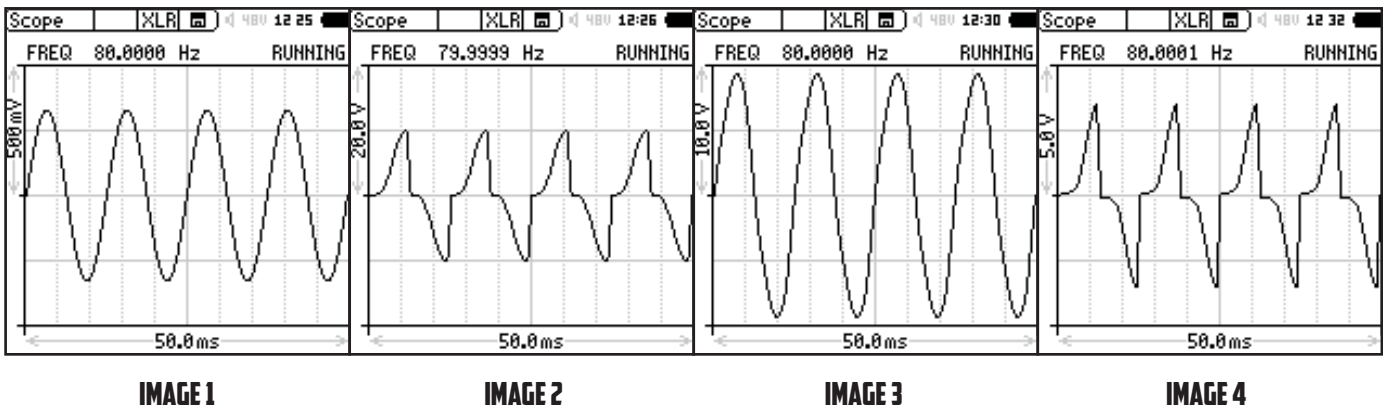
BY JIMMY DEN-ouden



PLUGGING A MIC INTO A CONSOLE ISN'T REALLY MUCH OF A TECHNICAL PROBLEM. SO LONG AS THE CABLE WORKS, YOU'RE BASICALLY HOME AND HOSED. IF OF COURSE YOU HAVE A SECOND CONSOLE INVOLVED, THINGS START TO BECOME MORE COMPLEX. YOU NEED TO SOMEHOW SPLIT THE SIGNAL. YOU CAN DO THIS A NUMBER OF WAYS – A Y SPLIT, A PASSIVE ISOLATED SPLIT, OR AN ACTIVE SPLIT.

Provided you're not splitting the signal more than once, a Y-split will often suffice. Indeed many venues use multi-cores which are equipped with monitor splits – essentially a Y split for every channel. Assuming your consoles are of reasonable quality this is usually okay. But what if you want to split to a third place for a recording or broadcast feed? You could Y-split the signal again, but you start really messing with the impedance the microphone sees. This can cause the mic to start behaving strangely, this behaviour manifesting itself as unpredictable changes to frequency response – but varying at different frequencies. Danger time!

Really, if you're sending a mic signal to more than 2 destinations you need to split it with a dedicated device. Active splitters are an excellent choice when you have someone around who knows how to operate them. Because they are actively buffering the signal, they need to have



their input gain appropriately set for every individual input. This is sometimes difficult in the context of a one-off live gig, so more commonly we see passive splits. These work by providing one direct output, and one or more transformer isolated outputs for each channel.

Here's the kicker though – not all transformers are created equal. Some of them are good, while others really suck. A tiny, low quality transformer will saturate much earlier on in the deal than a good one. What's this mean? Simply put, the transformer works by induction. You feed a signal into the coil on one side, this inducts a field into an iron core, which then inducts it into the coil on the other side of the core. Problem is, the core can only support so much magnetic flux. When you feed too much signal in one side, you don't get it all out the other side, and what you do get doesn't sound right. Low frequencies carry more energy, so they will cap out in the transformer before high frequencies.

I did a few tests using a couple of different isolation transformers. The first test was to pass 80Hz through a channel of a cheap 8 way transformer mic split. I fed 80Hz in at +18dBu line level. I looked at the output on a scope, which shows the lovely waveform looking all distorted and awful. **See image 1.**

Next up, I engaged a 29dB pad on the splitter. The output level drops considerably, but the integrity of the waveform is maintained. I bypassed the split and checked again and the waveform looked the same. **See image 2.**

The third test was the same as the first, but using a superior quality splitter. You can still note some distortion

on the downward swing of the waveform, but it's far less pronounced than on the cheap split. Look at **image 3**, and note also that there is slightly more attenuation through this splitter, which may account for the better quality output.

The last test was using a very small in-line transformer (still with a 1:1 ratio). I fed 80Hz in at +9dBu and again you can see the obvious distortion in **image 4.**

Okay, so granted 18dBu is a pretty hefty line level signal, and you're unlikely to encounter anything quite that hot coming off a stage. I deliberately pressed the point to provide some nice graphical examples with some actual scientific foundation. I should point out that things like load impedance can also have a bearing on the situation, so saturation may not be the exclusive cause of the illustrated effects. Transformers are more complex devices than you would imagine given the simplicity of the principle on which they are based.

So how does all this relate to you in the real world? Simply put, if you feed line level signals through mic level splitters, they are likely to be degraded and sound like arse. How much they sound like arse will depend on the signal level going in, and the transformer quality.

The bottom line here is that if you need to split line level signals through your mic splits, stick a pad in-line to attenuate the signal down. You'll still have plenty of signal left when it hits the desk, and it's likely to be far more intact at that point.



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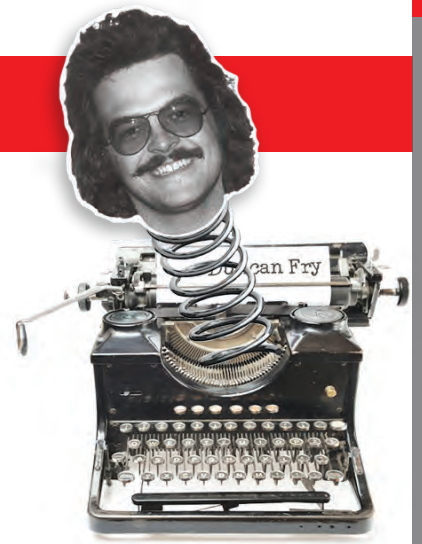
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The gig's cancelled

The delicate art of negotiation

About a month ago LL, the drummer from the Fabulous Harris Tweed Band, my regular mixing gig, called me and said "Dunk, mate - a big gig coming up in October. It's a mega function at the club, so they've booked us early to make sure we can do it."

"What's the date?" I asked
 "October the 5th, first Saturday in the month. Surely you haven't got anything on that night?"

I looked on the Afghan Hound calendar on the wall. There was a big circle drawn around the 3rd, with Shoulder scrawled underneath it.

"Hmmm, it's not looking good," I said. "I've got the operation on the 3rd to have all the metalwork taken out of my shoulder after my "much publicised" bike accident and I'll be in a sling for a couple of weeks. I'm not sure if I can change it - you know how hard it is to book these things"

"Jeez, you'll have to change it," he rasped. "It's gonna be big bucks for all of us. Your share will probably pay for your op!" Yeah right, as they say. I very much doubted that. Even with full hospital private cover I was still out of pocket a few grand when I had the first operation, and I was steeling myself for a similar charge for this one.

Still, all contributions to Dunk's Shoulder Charitable Trust would help, so I said "OK then, I'll call the specialist's office and see if I can get the op put back a week."

Luckily his office said "No problems Mr Fry, we'll just push it back a fortnight. I'll send you the new paperwork. Thanks for letting us know."

So, while on the phone to LL a few days ago, I asked, "How's that gig looking?"

"They've cancelled it. No money, they say"

"How can they have no money?" I yelled.

"Well," he said, "they did offer us \$150."

"Each?" I queried, hopefully.

"No, for all of us, so I told them to shove it."

"Bloody right," I agreed. "They'd be hard pressed to find a homeless backpacker with a stolen drum machine willing to do it for that amount of money."

It's a terrible load in anyway. Even with a minimal system it's a fair few loads from the trailer to the door along a soft gravel path - so there's no easy way to roll stuff without it getting bogged. It's quite possible to park and unload outside the front door but the club officials don't like it because it doesn't look good.

Perhaps it would look even better if we didn't turn up at all and they had no music?

LL rang me back a couple of days later

"Hey, I was at the club last night and their house system PA sounded terrible. Do you reckon you can stick your head in the door and - ."

"No"

" - have a quick -"

"No"

" - look at it?"

"Still No. It's a lose - lose situation. If I do, then I'll be the first point of contact whenever someone leaves the mic on and it goes flat, or kicks a plug out, or twiddles a knob or switch to make it sound 'better'. Because as you know, everyone has two jobs; their daytime one, and Pro Audio. Everyone knows what's wrong with the sound and how to fix it, until push comes to shove and they totally stuff it up. It's the hardest thing in the world to say, but No."

"Hmm, you seem to have mastered the art, though," he retorted.

"Yes, I've had a lot of practice!" I replied.

"Maybe you could charge them for it?" Ah, my weak spot!

"Let me see, if they don't have any money to pay a band to play, how are they going to find enough to pay for me to do a complete system checkup?" I paused "Do you think I can charge them?" I asked.

"No!" he said. Damn, he catches on quickly!

Call me a bit cynical if you like. Perhaps I am. If cynicism means that I don't believe you should work for nothing while other people make money out of you, then yup, I'm cynical.

Years ago I had a call from a band that I'd worked with quite regularly. They had a job in Albury (200 miles/300K away, on the border between Victoria and NSW) and could I do the gig? Well, it was a fair distance for just the one gig, and the engine in my big old Toyota F series truck had been playing up a bit; missing, spluttering and hard to start, but I said yes anyway. I had been regularly putting a bit aside in an engine repair fund, and with the money from this gig I'd be able to get some repairs done.

During the week I picked up their stage gear from the house they all shared, when I happened to be in the area. Their girlfriends helped me load it into the truck, as the boys were off on a photo shoot or something.

Bright and early on the day of the gig my trusty assistant Jim and I headed off to Albury. I wanted to have a bit of time up my sleeve so we wouldn't have to hurry, and to allow for anything unforeseen.

80k or so from Melbourne, the engine started to miss quite drastically, and by 150k had settled down to a ragged, uneven beat that indicated we were only running on 5 cylinders. As anyone who's driven a truck full of gear knows, losing that one cylinder makes all the difference on hills, but we eventually rattled our way into Albury and arrived at the gig.

"What gig?" asked the club manager when we arrived. "It was cancelled a week ago!"

I called the band. John the guitarist answered the phone.

"It's Dunk here," I said

"Oh, Dunk, thank heavens you called. We just found out this morning - the gig's been cancelled." he replied.

Lying bastard. What he meant was 'the gig was cancelled last week but we forgot to tell you'

"I know its been cancelled," I said through gritted teeth. "Jim and I have just driven 300k in a sick truck to get here."

"What - you're at the gig? In Albury?"

"Yes, here in Albury. Hot, sticky, tired and very sh**ty."

There was silence on the other end, but I persisted.

"What are you going to do about it? Remembering, of course, that I've got all your stage gear!"

John sounded nervous. He obviously had visions of his

guitar and amp joining the rest of their stuff in a starring role at the Albury rubbish tip that night!

"Oh, we'll fix you and Jim up for everything, Dunk, don't worry. Just take it easy with that stage gear, mate. We'll see you when you're back in Melbourne."

Jim and I got back in the truck, had a leisurely lunch on the band's petrol bill and then headed for home. The misfires from the engine got worse. Soon we were just crawling along, often running on 4 cylinders only, and frequently down to second gear for any slight incline.

It was dark by the time the truck wheezed into Melbourne. A whole day's driving for nothing. We were two really happy guys!

Still, the stage gear threat worked, and the band reluctantly paid us in full for the gig. Oddly enough I didn't work with them again - I think they either broke up or found someone more compliant!

Anyhow, I couldn't have cared less. With the money I managed to get a really good deal on a secondhand engine that had only done about 200k from new. It had come out of a Toyota Landcruiser that had rolled on the beach on King Island at the low tide point. When the tide came in, it was covered in sand, seaweed, and seafood, but being a late model engine, it was fully sealed, and ran like clockwork for as long as I had the truck.

As long as you didn't mind the smell of fish once the engine had warmed up!





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