

Roadskills

Neil Finn, Bruno Mars,
Kate Miller-Heidke

CX

MONTHLY TECH NEWS
AUDIO · LIGHTS · VIDEO · STAGING · INTEGRATION

CX92 MAY 2014 \$5.50
ONLINE EDITION

GEARBOX REVIEWS:

- PRG Best Boy 4000
- Shure LensHopper
- Tannoy Reveal 402
- Robe ROBIN 800 LEDWash
- Redback A4480

CX NEWS:

- Asbestos Case Won
- Onstage Presentations
- TOD battle, PHAROS for ULA
- Palace Theatre closure, QSC
- Trade Show War intensifies

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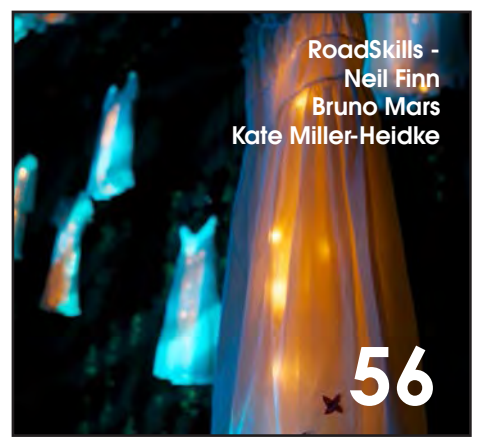
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EDITORIAL BY JULIUS GRAFTON

SINGER SCREWS CREW

I had a most depressing coffee with a senior sound engineer at Balmain just before press-time. I'd run into him a while back and gleaned he was suffering some financial duress. Then he asked me to coffee and indicated he needed several thousand dollars urgently. Asked why, he said that he was owed more than that, by a veteran Australian female singer, who is a notoriously difficult woman. My empathy for the guy is very real and seeing his mismanagement of his business and the performer not paying her crew troubled me greatly.

MANAGING MONEY

Following on from the coffee story above, I reflected on our new TV show called The Hit List. In the current episode (see cx-tv.com) we talk about Soundwave going slow on payments for this year's festival. Promoter AJ Maddah can't deny it as we have sufficient suppliers complaining. CX went easy on him when the story first emerged, hoping he would find the money but at press-time significant money remains owed to a spread of suppliers. What bothers us is the apparent link to the failure of Big Day Out, which AJ was also integral with. AJ also owns Billy Hyde Stage Systems "Australia's Leading Backline Hire Company". Someone bought the building housing that firm for \$3.5m recently.

INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION

The longer we manage the Knock Off Entertainment Gear Australia Alerts Facebook group, the more new small production outfits emerge. Spookily a number of these firms are using no-name line array speaker systems and ground support or rigging systems from who knows where. The more of these that find work, the greater the probability one will break and dump on an audience, which is why the accreditation push detailed in News is happening. Any rigging accident that hurts or kills audience will see harsh restrictions placed on the live production industry nationally.

TOD BATTLE LOST?

On CX-TV News we reported the decision by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission that Staging Connections had not breached laws in charging Technician On Duty fees. Staging boss Tony Chamberlain pointed out that they did not regard TOD fees as a 'battle', and made a reasoned argument. The ACCC ruling should put this issue to bed. It also helps to clarify what is reasonable. We have a copy of the ruling at juliusmedia.com – search ACCC. To view the April CX-TV News go to cx-tv.com

-Julius**PUBLISHERS PANEL**

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NEWS

CX INDUSTRY NEWS



Asbestos Case Won by Wickham LD Wins Compensation

Lighting designer and Star Events Centre entertainment manager Steve Wickham has settled out of court with asbestos manufacturer James Hardie. Steve has a fatal lung condition caused by exposure to fibro in 1994, and took court action that led to startling revelations by a former Hardie CEO.

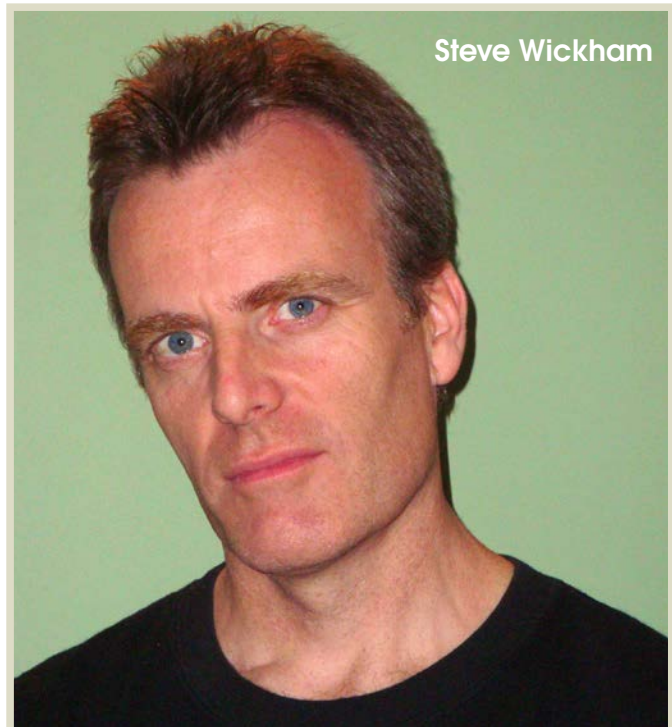
In the case, new evidence arose that will assist other victims in future compensation hearings. Steve's lawyer found the evidence, which led to Hardie's settling his case on confidential terms.

Steve is still working, following successful treatment. "I intend to work as much as I can", he told CX. "I've been through Chemotherapy and was fairly sick in that period. Now I'm stabilised and feeling pretty good – I'm fine in normal work conditions."

His case was one of the first involving third line victims, where Steve demolished a structure build of Hardie Fibro in 1994. His lawyer Tanya Segelov, from law firm Turner Freeman stumbled on a book by former managing director of James Hardie Industries, David MacFarlane. His testimony led to the firm settling with Steve.

Steve's diagnosis of mesothelioma followed severe lung pains when yawning or breathing deeply, last August. The condition is fatal.

"I really hope the case helps others in the future", he said.



Steve Wickham

CX wish him and his family all the best for the future. Anyone exposed to asbestos, including electrical cables used on pre 1975 lighting equipment, should watch for any changes in respiration.

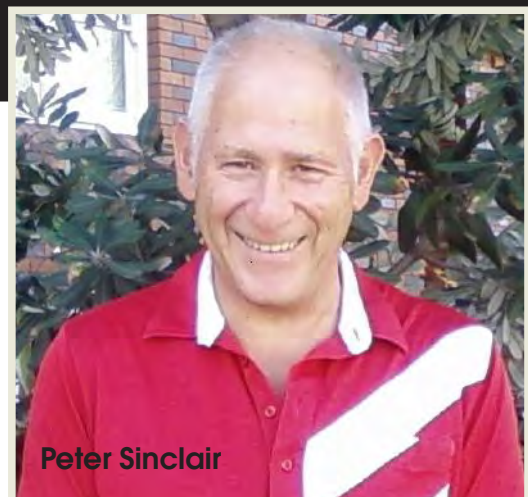


Onstage Presentations Peter Sinclair to pass baton

In 1982 Peter Sinclair moved his business and family to Australia, staging events and roadshows around Australia and New Zealand. Now aged 70 Peter will retire, and offers the business or parts of it, for sale as a going concern.

He offers the staging division of Onstage Presentations, with a possible finance package available after approval. See more about Onstage at <http://www.onstageav.com.au>

See also page 59 for advert.



Peter Sinclair



TOD Battle Concludes ACCC clears Staging Connections

The Technician on Duty battle has been won, by Staging Connections. The leading Australian audio visual supply firm followed an American model by introducing fees for supervision of external AV production at its in house venues. This led to complaints by firms that they faced payments for access to rigging points, power, and venue infrastructure.

Now the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has ruled that Staging Connections has not breached laws in its conduct as in house supplier for venues. The Commission said that Technician on Duty fees can be charged and do not lessen competition.

The ruling followed complaints by a group of independent audio visual providers who objected to charges for access and supervision at some venues where Staging Connections were in-house suppliers. These 'technician on duty' fees and associated costs can stack up.

ACCC ruled that TOD does not constitute Third Line Forcing, which revolves around conditional supply. Significantly the Commission also said that following a lengthy investigation; Staging Connections faces strong competition within the Audio Visual industry.

Tony Chamberlain is the CEO of Staging Connections, he says they prefer not to think of this issue as a battle. "As we've



Tony Chamberlain

consistently stated, Staging Connections doesn't initiate or require to provide TOD services for any event. Our company is a service provider and we provide a TOD service to a hotel only as and when a hotel requests it, and then only at a labour charge to the hotel. There has been a lot of incorrect commentary about our company's role in TOD and we hope that the ACCC's extensive enquiries and response assists to clarify."



PHAROS FOR ULA

The ULA Group has announced a new partnership with Pharos as the Australian distributor of their lighting control solutions.

Cuono Biviano, Managing Director of ULA Group says: "It is with great pleasure to welcome Pharos on board as part of the ULA Group family of world leading lighting solution products. Pharos is a leader in architectural lighting and room zone control for both lighting and audio-visual products. Pharos pride themselves in high level customer support and highly reliable turnkey solutions, which is a key protocol of the ULA Group culture. I look forward to working with Tony and all of the team and delivering real solutions and training to our clients."

Tony Symms, Regional Manager Asia Pacific of Pharos, says: "We are delighted to welcome the ULA Group into the family of distribution partners for Pharos Architectural Controls. Our new relationship with ULA will enable us to further extend the Pharos network and provide service and technical support for Australia.



Tony Symms - Regional Manager Asia Pacific of Pharos & Cuono Biviano - Managing Director of ULA Group

We will be working closely with ULA to promote Pharos in the region to provide quality control systems for any application."



THEATRES Palace to Close

Melbourne's Palace Theatre in Bourke Street will close late this month, as the owners - property developers Jinshan Investments - prepare plans for a 15 story hotel on the site.

General manager, Greg Young, told Fairfax that 'efforts to keep the venue open in any form had been exhausted and last-minute pleas to extend the lease had fallen on deaf ears.'

Mr Young (quoted in Fairfax) said the operators had spent more than six months trying to find a new mid-sized venue in Melbourne to take the place of the 1855-person Palace, to no avail.

CX join all who loved the venue - cherish the memories.



Vision and Hills SVL Join forces in Australia

Vision, a manufacturer of AV installation products, has signed an exclusive distribution agreement with Hills SVL in Australia.

Vision offers a wide range of AV services and applications, including staging; rental; digital signage; and corporate installations.

Vision's General Manager Stuart Lockhart said "We're

delighted to announce this new partnership with Hills SVL who are well known to have a great team of technical sales people that provides resellers with unparalleled technical, logistics, and credit support."

This partnership will deliver a wider range of AV products to Hills SVL's valued customers. Vision's complete Professional AV product range including connectivity and control solutions, a select range of audio components and installation mounts, will be available through Hills SVL online store and branches.

For details of your nearest Hills SVL branch visit www.hillssvl.com.au or call 1800 685 487



QSC K Series hits 10k Powered Speaker powers

Launched in mid-2009 QSC's K-Series took a different slant on the powered speaker. It was the first product that combined the company's amplifier, speaker and DSP technologies, with clean styling.

Later the birch ply KW series was introduced and the following year KLA (K-Series line-array) effectively

completed the 10 model House-of-K (HoK) line up. Stretching from 8" 2-way to concert line-array, HoK products hit the 10,000 units deployed in Australia - in just under 5 years.

'10,000 units is a remarkable milestone' said Joe Pham QSC's CEO. 'May I take the opportunity to thank the thousands of Australians who have embraced HoK products'.

HoK extends from K8 at \$1,199 to KLA12 at \$3,999. www.tag.com.au



THEATRES Ogden exit Perth venues

Western Australia's Culture and the Arts Minister John Day announced that the Perth Theatre Trust will manage the operations of His Majesty's Theatre, the State Theatre Centre, Perth Concert Hall and Subiaco Arts Centre from January 1, 2015.

Mr Day said the State Government's decision to bring the management of these venues 'in-house' would directly benefit Western Australian theatre goers and the performing arts sector.

"Much has changed for the arts in the 15 years

since the agreement with AEG Ogden (Perth) Pty Ltd was established. The number and quality of our venues has increased, as has the number of resident arts companies," he said.

"The return of the Perth Theatre Trust as the operator of these venues will enhance the trust's working relationship with its key stakeholder, the performing arts sector, creating a closer business partnership with resident companies and venue hirers.

"It will also provide the opportunity to increase the quantity and diversity of the performances on offer at these venues, ensuring the spaces are activated for key events such as Fringe and the Perth International Arts Festival.

"I thank the staff at AEG Ogden (Perth) for their service and commitment to the Trust and the performing arts sector."



Trade Show War Intensifies

SMPTE trade show boss Gary Fitz-Roy has taken a shot at the peak industry association ACETA. Mr Fitz-Roy has accused ACETA of taking a secret commission from the promoters of the ENTECH trade show.

ACETA, which represents equipment distributors and manufacturers, rejected the accusation and pointed

out they had published extensive details of their prior dealings with ENTECH. These were detailed in the February 2013 issue of CX.

The dispute follows CX revealing a new Sportscasting Expo with a significant trade show component to be run in Melbourne by Mr. Fitz-Roy's company Expertise Events. ACETA were critical of the trade show, saying that the broadcast technology industry could not afford a new event that competed against SMPTE.



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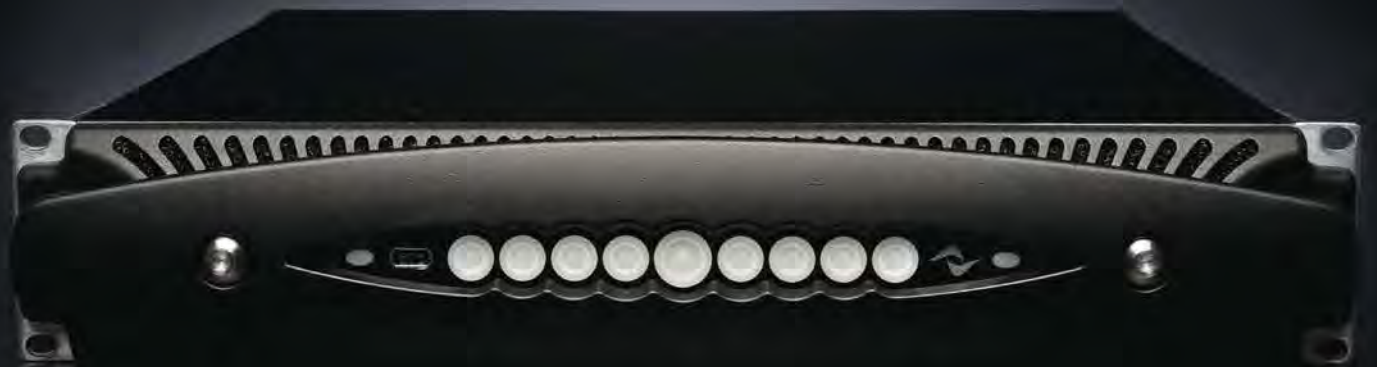


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EDITED BY JASON ALLEN

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PR Lighting XLED 250 Spot

New from PR Lighting is the XLED 250 Spot, a fully-featured, compact and lightweight LED moving spot that rounds out PR's XLED range.

Designed specifically for club and bar use, the XLED 250 Spot delivers significant output from its highly efficient Luminus 50W CBT-90-W Big Chip white LED source. Power consumption is miserly at less than 120W.

The XLED 250 Spot comes with a fixed colour wheel comprising eight colours, plus open, and a gobo wheel, with 11 gobos plus open. Head movement consists of adjustable speed 540° (pan) and 190° (tilt), with pan, tilt, swap and invert functions, auto position correction and magnetic sensor position monitoring. Full-range 0-100% linearly adjustable dimming, electronic strobe (with 0.3-20fps) and standard beam angle of 20° round out the feature set of this work-horse moving spot luminaire.



VUE Audiotechnik hs-20 subwoofer

VUE Audiotechnik have introduced the new hs-20 subwoofer with Active Compliance Management. Originally developed for the hs-28 and hs-25 systems, VUE's patent-pending ACM technology combines a unique hybrid transducer alignment with sophisticated on-board electronics.



The new hs-20 places a pair of custom-engineered, high powered long excursion 10-inch transducers into the ACM alignment. From there, powerful onboard electronics include ACM-optimized DSP, and dual channel high efficiency amplifiers capable of maximum output without the need of noisy cooling fans. The net result is a highly advanced, fully integrated electro-acoustic subwoofer ecosystem capable of delivering massive amounts of clean low-end energy from a deceptively small footprint.

**Philips Entertainment
Showline Nitro 510C
and Showline SL
WASH 350**

The Philips Entertainment Showline SL NITRO 510C is an RGBW LED strobe luminaire that delivers intense bursts of coloured and white light and dynamic effects. The tightly packed array of 264 high power fixed white LEDs and 264 RGB LEDs ensures maximum output for both traditional white effects and an almost infinite choice of colour with full field and even distribution across 120°.

A unique quick-connect systems allows SL NITRO 510C units to connect together easily top-to-bottom and side-by-side. In addition, the form factor of the SL NITRO 510C matches the SL NITRO 510 and the SL BAR 520, so the three luminaires can be interconnected providing unlimited design possibilities.

The Showline SL WASH 350 LED Luminaire delivers an extremely bright homogenous beam from a compactly sized moving head. The luminaire's 19 RGBW 15-watt LEDs deliver over 5,800 lumens of output and an extremely wide colour palette. The motorized zoom range of 8° to 40° provides designers with the freedom to use the SL WASH 350 as a special or as a wash luminaire.



**BSS
Soundweb London BLU-50**

The BSS Soundweb family has expanded with the introduction of the BLU-50. The BLU-50 is a half-rack width processor that offers a fixed configuration of four inputs and four outputs, configurable signal processing, logic processing and BLU link. The device can be powered with the included 12VDC power supply, but can accept 12-48VDC via a terminal block connector. The BLU-50 can also be powered with PoE+ via the Ethernet port, allowing the device to be powered, and configured, controlled and monitored using a single Cat 5e cable.

The four analogue inputs of the BLU-50 provide software configurable gain in 6dB steps up to +48dB per channel and software selectable Phantom Power per channel. Phantom Power, Signal indication and Clip information per channel is clearly available on the front panel negating the need for a PC.

The BLU-50 features BLU link, a low latency, fault tolerant digital audio bus of 48 channels, which uses standard Category 5e cabling giving a distance of 100m between compatible devices. As with other Soundweb London devices, 12 Control Inputs, six Logic Outputs and an RS-232 port allow the BLU-50 to be integrated with other compatible devices.



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d&b
xC-Series column loudspeakers

The d&b audiotechnik White range of integration solutions has expanded to include the xC-Series column loudspeakers. The xC-Series comprises three loudspeakers, the 16C, 24C and 24C-E, all designed for seamless integration into difficult acoustic and aesthetic environments, from houses of worship to conference halls, auditoriums and public spaces; anywhere where the requirement for high speech intelligibility is matched by visual demands.

The xC-Series utilises high vertical directivity control to focus output on listeners and reduce energy radiating into the reverberant field. The 2-way passive 24C has a nominal dispersion of 90° x 20° (h x v) with a HF array that can be mechanically adjusted continuously between 0° and -14° in the vertical plane. This is combined with an LF section comprising six 4" drivers producing a beam with a fixed downward tilt of 5° and significant vertical dispersion control down to 370 Hz. The 24C-E extension, with a further six 4" drivers, can be attached directly to the 24C increasing vertical pattern control down to 190 Hz, without any additional amplification or processing. The smaller 16C houses four 4" drivers and a 0.75" compression driver mounted on a CD horn, producing a nominal dispersion of 90° x 40° (h x v). The 4" drivers are deployed in a unique cardioid setup radiating through waveguide elements at the front and damped ports at the rear of the cabinet.



Powersoft
X Series power amplifiers



The Powersoft X Series represents the next step in the evolution of the power amplifier: the first amplifier that in reality is a system tool that integrates a large amount of functionality, generally only found in separate outboard units. This includes an innovative system of channel routing, a truly universal mono, bi and three-phase balancing power supply and a revolutionary fully-featured DSP.

The X Series consists of two models. The X8 is the largest amplifier in the range, boasting eight channels in a 2U chassis, while the X4 features four channels in a single rack unit. Both models share the same power density, being capable of delivering up to 5200W @ 2 ohms per channel. The X Series natively supports AES3, two redundant Dante by Audinate digital streams and analogue inputs, providing up to four different selectable input sources per channel.

Dynaudio
'AIR Control' Software

Dynaudio Professional has unveiled a new AIR Control application for Mac and PC, allowing users to carry out advanced calibration and alignment of their AIR monitoring system. The software provides access to advanced tools and features inside AIR monitors and subwoofers including timing and SPL calibration and parametric EQs for each monitor. Air Control allows users to define and store custom setups and presets with selective parameter locking, and a special measurement mode provides EQ line signal out from selected monitors.

AIR Control replaces Dynaudio Professional's original 'TC PC-IP' installer software that was developed for professional installers. The new AIR Control application design is easier to use and an even more efficient way to fine-tune a complete, digital AIR monitoring system. The new AIR Control runs on Mac, PC and Windows-based tablets.





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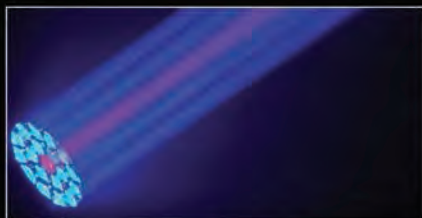


A.LEDA B-EYE K10



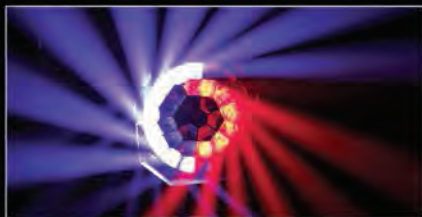
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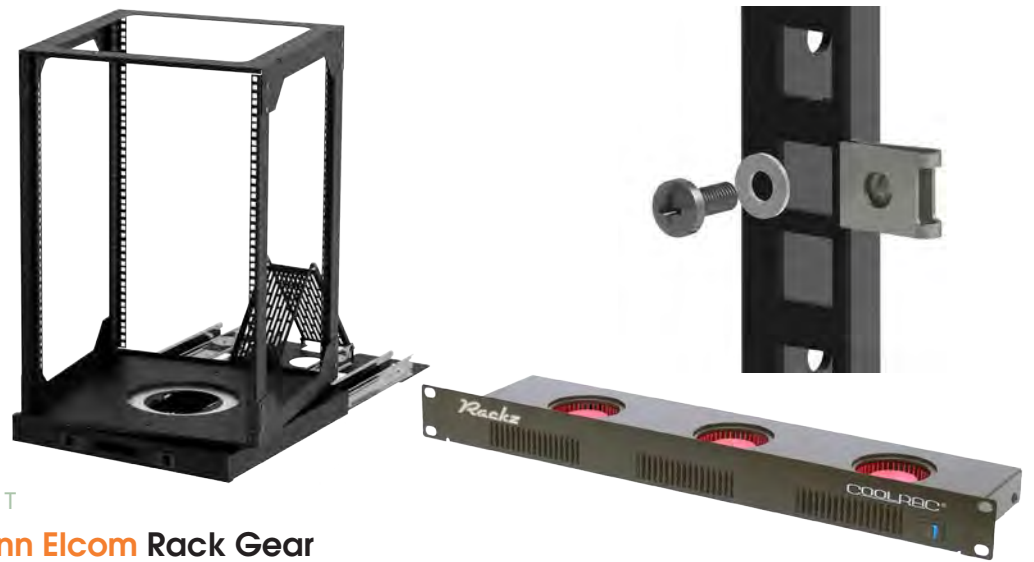
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- VUE



Penn Elcom Rack Gear

Penn Elcom have released a raft of new racking and installation utility products. Products that particularly caught our eye here at CX include the Rackz Rack Cooling Fans, Slide & Rotate Rack System and Rack Rail Clip Nuts.

The CoolRac is a very quiet 1U Hi hot air extraction unit, using 3 mini blowers to expel heat from 19" equipment racks. Behind the 1U escutcheon the ergonomic 1/2U space design allows the CoolRaC to be placed in between layers of equipment to pull heat directly away from the gear.

The Slide & Rotate Rack System is designed for greater accessibility to rack mount equipment and cables. This rack can be housed inside enclosed spaces by bolting/ screwing the enclosure base plate down to a solid surface. The R8010 rack enclosure slides out and has a rotating plate. These features allow the rack enclosure to be extended and rotated 90 degrees either way. The rear of the enclosure has an optional cable management bar which contracts as the rack is slid back into its fixed position. The slide & rotate rack is available in 6U, 8U, 12U, 16U and 20U versions.

The Rack Rail Clip Nuts are innovative clip nuts for rack rails. They simply slide onto rack rail square holes, creating a threaded hole and eliminating the need of cage nuts, keeping our rack rail threads from wearing with time.



Barco OBLX free-standing video wall

Barco's OBLX series free-standing video wall answers the business need for tiled 55" LCD video walls that don't require wall support. Key design drivers include maximum stability without compromising user-interaction, sleek appearance, and cost-effectiveness. The architecture supports landscape 2x2 or portrait 3x1 configurations that can be expanded with no horizontal limit by modularity. Its column can house all required 19"-based equipment, so there is no need for an extra rack.



TC Electronic UpCon Hi-Res Audio Upconverter

UpCon is a cinema-quality upconverter that gives broadcasters peace of mind that their transmission will always be optimized for 5.1 HD TV. Now, it can also be inserted via unbalanced AES in the transmission chain, which allows the broadcast stations to choose whether they want to route the entire SDI signal or just the audio via AES through UpCon.

UpCon is a combined and uncompromising upconversion and downmix processor in a single, high-

density rack unit. It continuously monitors the channel format of the incoming audio, and if the signal falls back from true 5.1 to stereo, UpCon seamlessly cross-fades into a convincing 5.1 surround upconversion without adding any interruptions or artefacts. The AES version of UpCon comes fully loaded with 16 physical channels of unbalanced AES I/O, and by default the first 8 channels are active. Should the station need to utilize even more channels, a license for activating channels 9-16 can be purchased separately.

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The Ellison Museum of Magnetic Recording

In the leafy Adelaide suburb of Malvern, in an unassuming home, sits an extraordinary collection of Australia's, and the world's, legacy of sound recording equipment. Founded by Neville Ellison and continued on by his son Keith, the Museum is a treasure-trove of forgotten technologies from the days when Australians built their own gear. Jason Allen was privileged to get a guided tour...

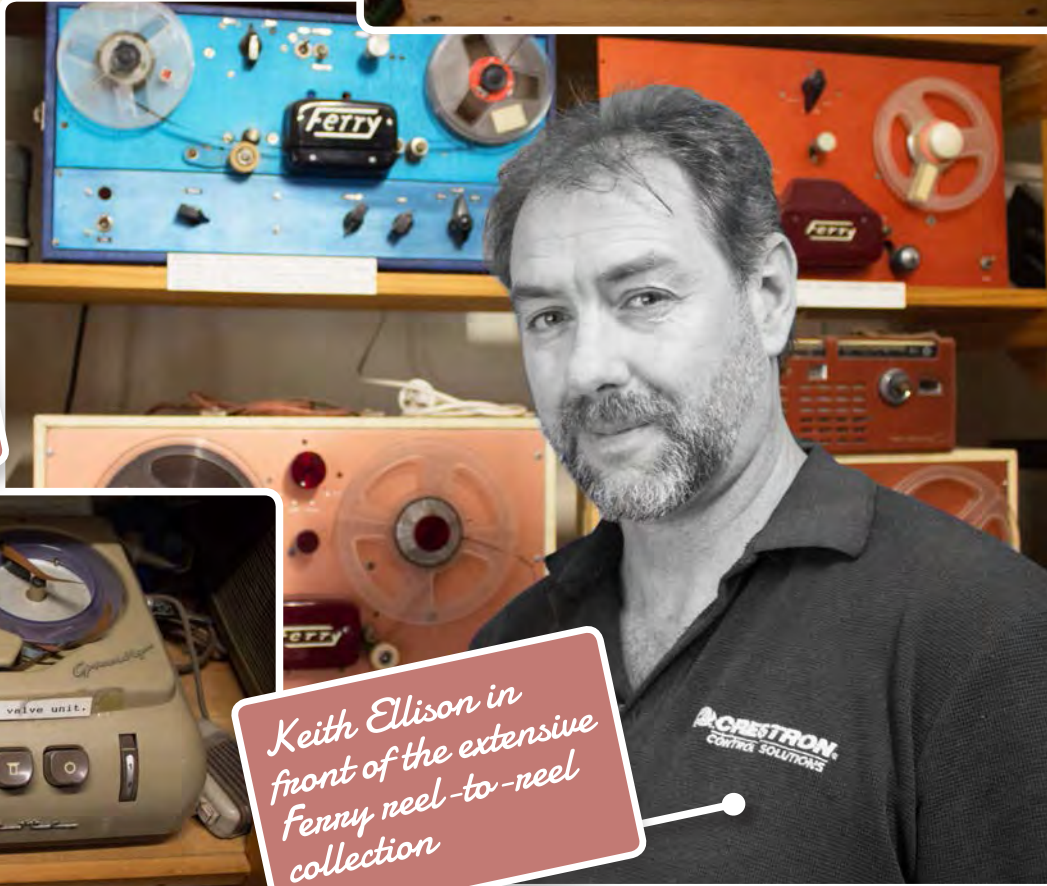
Keith Ellison, in addition to being AV Sales Engineer at Adelaide's Total Electronic Contracting, is the proud curator of The Ellison Museum of Magnetic Recording, an amazing collection of rare and antique audio gear with a focus on Australia's history of manufacturing radios and tape recorders. The collection has its origin with Keith's Dad, Neville, who passed away several years ago. Neville was passionate about radios as a kid, building his first crystal set as a kid of 17, before becoming a projectionist in the Army through World War II.

BY JASON ALLEN



The ingenious but short-lived Gnamdeck by Andrew Merrifield Ltd

The value-powered Grundig Stenorette, launched in 1954 with its own cassette standard. It was referred to colloquially as the 'Tree Frog'.



Keith Ellison in front of the extensive Fenny reel-to-reel collection



After the war, Neville returned to Adelaide and worked a series of jobs related to his passion, including a stint building radios and tape recorders for the long-since gone Fenny. Post-war, importation of equipment such as radios and reel-to-reel tape recorders was outrageously expensive, so Australians simply built their own. Every city was home to a cottage industry in consumer electronics, and Adelaide was no exception. Founded by electrical

engineer Jack Ferry, the company operated out of a glorified shed in Lower Mitcham. They were so successful that they exported valve radios to Japan.

Pause/Record

Fenny reel-to-reel machines take pride of place in the collection, but Neville was an avid collector, and devices spanning almost the whole history of recorded

Valves and valve radios



The splendidly named Assman Dictation Recorder out of Germany used seven inch plastic discs with a magnetic coating to record voice from the microphone built in to the attached controller



This Thermionic Products recondner used spools of paper tape coated with magnetic oxide, and was controlled with a joystick!



sound are featured in his collection. "Dad was the sort of person that never had just one multimeter." reminisced Keith. "He'd have six." Neville's acquisitiveness means that visitors to the collection can see multiple examples of wire recorders, paper recorders, magnetic disc dictation machines and ingenious devices whose market was quickly eclipsed by changing technology.

One example is a reel-to-reel tape recording device called the Gramdeck, made by Andrew Merryfield Ltd in London in the 50s. The device capitalised on the fact that everyone already owned a turntable, and fitted on to your record player's spindle to drive the reels. Its output went to your existing system. It's a fascinating example of how fast technology was changing in the post-war boom. Obviously a great idea, it was soon eclipsed by the introduction of the compact cassette in 1962.

Fast Forward

There's much for vintage gear nuts to drool over. The highly sought after Watkins Copicat tape echo unit defined the sound of pop and psychedelia in the 60s, and one of the earliest units produced is in working order in the collection. "Dad told me that when he worked with Jack Ferry, they custom-built an endless loop tape echo to be used at Elder Park for major events" Keith related. "They built it as a delay for the horn rings that supplemented the main PA. They did it all with manual measurements and the physical spacing of the heads to get the delay right. We just do it with DSP these days."

Keith has added outdated gear from his own career too, though some of it is still highly sought after by producers the world over. A Roland DC-30 analogue echo and chorus unit sits atop an AKG Acoustics BX5 spring reverb, all crowned with a Roland Tr-606 Drumatix drum machine, the combination of which would thrill any dub or reggae engineer. Some of this gear is selling for more than its original asking price.

Rewind

The Museum is currently housed in a private house, and listed with the SA State Government as a Registered Private Museum, with visits by appointment only. Keith's ambition is to find the collection a permanent home that's open to the public. "I've been talking with David Murphy, who's the chair of the South Australian branch of the Audio Engineering Society, about trying to get the collection into a permanent display where the public can see it." explained Keith. The most likely spaces to house the collection are buildings already heritage-listed and donated to the government in perpetuity.

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Just some of the Museum's antique microphones, including a rare and valuable Altec

"Eight years ago when I was on holiday in Ireland, I went to an old gaol in Cork that had been opened as a tourist attraction" Keith continued. "There were eight rooms in the gaol set up as a radio museum, primarily because Marconi did the first radio transmission from Cork. That made me realise that back here in Australia, National Trust Buildings have to be open to the public, have to be maintained and made accessible. Adelaide Gaol presents an opportunity as it's open to the public, it's manned, it's maintained and has plenty of unused rooms."

Audio nerds and Australian history buffs interested in visiting the museum can drop Keith a line at keith@tecsa.com.au. It's worth the trip.

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Thorsten Sattler,
MD of SGM Deutschland:

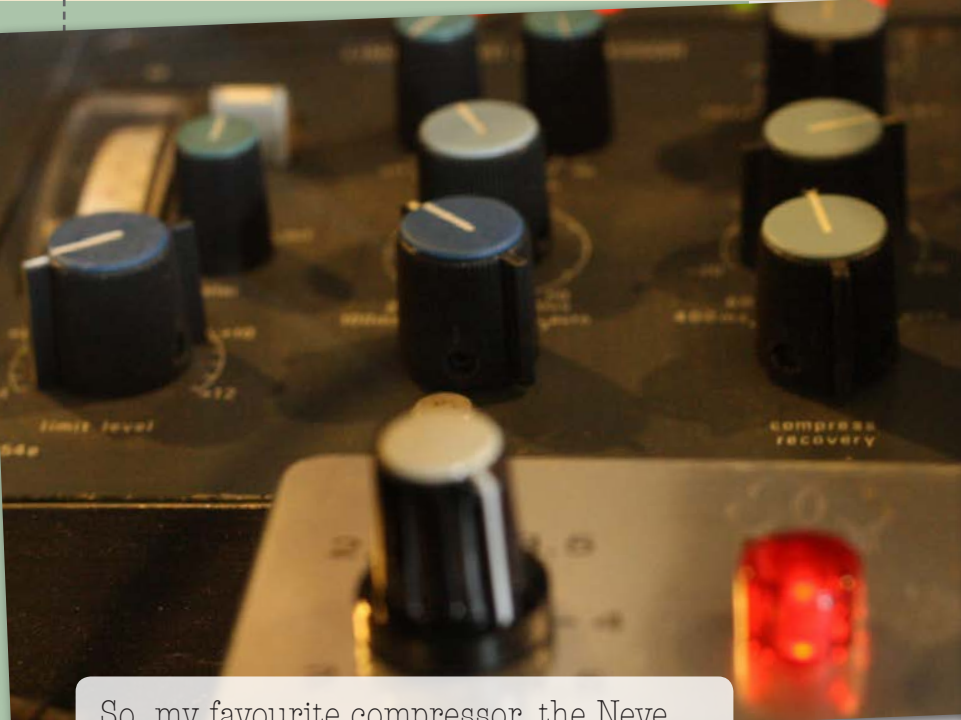
"The instant success of the P-5 in Germany was based on the fact that the product is so powerful and also that the rental companies experience huge savings on tours, because they can easily fit five P-5 units in a box of the size of one comparable product".



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THE MILL REPORT

THE SCATTER-BRAINED OWNER/OPERATOR



So, my favourite compressor, the Neve 32254e, has flipped out this week, emitting the most brutally distorted sound I've ever heard out of the right-hand side of anything. It's possibly the most expensive overdrive pedal on earth right now... but that's not its role here at The Mill. I wish it would just work.

The idea of shipping this, my most prized stereo compressor/limiter, to Rob Squire in Adelaide doesn't exactly thrill me either. Rob is great but he's 1000ks away, and that means couriers – guys who mostly kick stuff around in a warehouse somewhere until something breaks. I dread the idea of this legendary compressor in the hands of these clowns. God knows what goes on when they take equipment away from here... torture, dismemberment... and to think we pay them!

Someone should make a horror movie about couriers one day I reckon. Maybe call it *Courier On Elm Street* or *Overnight Of The Living Dead*. Or even better: *Friday the 13th? It Was Supposed to Be Here By The 3rd!*

Owning your own studio sounds romantic and exciting, and in many respects it is. But when you operate the whole business by yourself, how the hell do you manage it without things coming apart at the seams when things get busy? Who makes the tea, who rings the piano tuner, who does the accounts, who cleans the place, who organises the tech to come in to repair the busted compressor, who answers the phone, responds to emails and greets clients at the door? Has anyone ever heard the word 'employee' before?

Yeah, okay, not that funny, but I've got to find something to laugh at. I've had a horror week this week. Things blowing up, pedals breaking on old pump organs, couriers losing packages and software growing unpredictable right as new work floods in that needs to be turned around by 'yesterday'. I'm trying to get through it all, but when things stop working, I stop working. The whiteboard that I use to remind me of jobs currently in production is starting to look more like a Pro Hart painting...

Add to this drama the reality of my Mother-In-Law coming from the US to meet her new grandson next week. It's going to be one crowded household down here... a two-week game of *Stacks On The Mill* I reckon. I have to tell all my clients to cool their heels for the duration – which will no doubt seem like an eternity to them – while I play host to a woman who's never been outside the state of California. Australia in 12 days... hmm.

"Okay, well, I guess we should go find some kangaroos then..."

Thankfully they're right out the lounge room window down here.

BY ANDY STEWART

DEADLINES

I've never been very good at rushing mixes or masters out the door I've got to say. I'm a staunch advocate of the notion that a clear head and fresh ears make better, more decisive decisions than tired, overworked ones. I guess that's why I live in the country and work at my own pace. How this philosophy is likely to play out against the impending onslaught is anyone's guess, but I'm certainly not going to cram a month's work into two weeks in a vain attempt to keep everyone happy. No way José. So I'm putting a plan together that basically involves finishing off a couple of smaller projects so there are less loose ends floating around in my life. And by 'putting a plan together' I mean, writing it down for the first time right here and now... This brainwave is as new to me as it is to you!

SO, WHAT'S THE PLAN?

To get a few projects over the line, like I said. That way I'll have a few less frustrated clients, less projects on my SSD drive – it's relatively small at 249GB and fills up fast – and some more money in the door.

One of the drawbacks of the studio owner/operator is that there's often half a dozen projects running simultaneously, sometimes more, which takes some organising, and that means time! There are countless phone calls back and forth, text messages, emails, Facebook posts, Skype calls... and heaven help anyone who misses a few...

"Mate, you're a hard man to track down! I've been trying to ring you about sending me that Dropbox link to RoughMix 8."

"Um, yeah, well, I spoke to you half an hour ago... and nothing's changed since then. Checking the laptop now, it's still uploading and I'm in a session so I can't really talk for long."

"Oh, cool, who is it? Anyone I know...?"

GET AN ASSISTANT/SECRETARY

If this sounds familiar to you, perhaps it's time to consider an employee: either a secretary or an assistant of some kind. You know, someone to help you when things are

busy, or clean up and get organised when they're not! These sorts of interruptions happen to me a lot, and I know it's a common problem amongst most of my audio colleagues. Yet I honestly can't think of a single studio owner/operator who has anything resembling a secretary or assistant any more. Gone are the days of studios having employees it would seem. We're all trying to do everything, and I don't think it's working out that well, particularly from the client's perspective.

Having one eye on the console, another on our email inbox, an ear out for text messages and couriers, and the other occasionally on the mix is no way to work. It's bad practise: bad for the client, bad for the mix, bad for your reputation and bad for productivity.

And it's nuts because there are people all over the place looking for a studio 'in', so there's no shortage of workers if you're interested in finding one. They ring me every week looking for work... (but of course I don't answer I because I'm so focussed on mine...). Sure they cost money, but perhaps you would more than cover this overhead if you had someone to help out.

I've been contemplating this idea for some time now and done nothing about it. Getting an assistant for the studio sounds good to me... someone local who is mad keen on audio production and can make a decent cup of tea.

Actually, the last time I had someone like that here I was working with Paul Kelly on his recent album *Spring and Fall*, and the first time Roxanne (not her real name) made us both tea, I swear it was the worst cuppa I've ever tasted. Paul was amazed: "Mate, if she can't make tea, what the hell is she doing here?" ...Or something like that.

It was pretty funny actually, because presumably the idea of an assistant is that they save you time, allow you to keep focussed while some of the more tedious aspects of the job get done seamlessly and invisibly around you. Not so with this girl. I had to show her how to make tea in a pot on two separate occasions, as did Paul at one point. Needless to say we were both in agreement that there's not much point having an

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THE MILL REPORT...cont'd

assistant when they require so much of it themselves! But I must try again. In fairness to Roxanne, I don't think she was that keen on the engineering side of things, so she was bored witless most of the time. I need someone who wants 'in', is mad keen to help anyway he (or she) can and wants to learn the ropes.

If you're like me, and you've spent the last several years looking for reasons why you *shouldn't* employ someone, perhaps it's time to think of some reasons why you *should*. There are thousands of benefits to having a decent assistant in the studio, not to mention the fact that someone has to pass on our knowledge to the next generation.

For starters it will allow you to be far more productive. Getting things over the line promptly, more efficiently and more effectively can only benefit your bottom line, improve customer satisfaction and your reputation... Right, that's it, I'm convinced! I'm gonna finish off this article and make some inquires...

Oh, and wouldn't you know it, I've just heard the dreaded train toot on my laptop... another email about yet another job. This proves my point: if I don't work more efficiently I can't get through the workload. Time to get some help.

ANDY STEWART RUNS THE MILL IN SOUTH GIPPSLAND, VICTORIA. HE'S ALWAYS HAPPY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT RECORDING, MIXING OR MASTERING. CONTACT HIM HERE: ANDY@THEMILL.NET.AU (HE'LL GET BACK TO YOU WHEN HE CAN... OR MAYBE HIS ASSISTANT WILL!)

TOOLBOX *AUDIO-TECHNICA*
review *ATH-M50x*
HEADPHONES

I seem to have written about a few sets of headphones lately. I guess it's because, like most studios around the country, I'm always on the lookout for new ones because they take such a beating during recording sessions.

This time it feels a bit like déjà vu. The Audio-Technica ATH-M50x is a tweaked version of a product I know very well. I think I have about five pairs of the M50s... great headphones. (The new model has a small 'x' suffix. What it denotes I have no idea.)

Discovering any differences between the models requires forensic examination because they do look very similar (although the M50x comes in black, white and some blue/grey colour with a tan headband.) Most notably, the new model has a detachable cable on the left ear – the old model did not. This allows you to swap between curly and straight cables as required, which I really like, and replace damaged cables whenever that's required. Better still, the cable gently locks into place, so it won't come out unless you want it to.

The headphones also come with a couple of extra cables: one 3m long, the other 1.2m. A nice touch I reckon. It not only shows that Audio-Technica realises that cables break from time to time and that when they do you don't want to have to wait for weeks for a replacement, it's just plain generous... and generosity goes a long way.

If you're not familiar with the M50x or its predecessor, they're a DJ-styled over-the-ear, closed-back headphone, ideal for tracking and monitoring duties: relatively big on bass and clean in the top end. The headphones swivel, which confounds some and suits others, and overall they're robust and designed to take a beating. But they're also very comfortable and easy to wear for extended periods. I use them every day at The Mill and they've never missed a beat.

The new model sounds almost identical to the old one; the difference being that upgrade slightly does away with so much glassy top-end. The difference is subtle to the point where sometimes I think I'm imagining it, but when I do hear the difference, it feels like an improvement.

Hard to beat, the ATH-M50x headphones just bloody work, day in and day out.



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SOUNDS LIKE  LEWITT

MELBOURNE'S SOUNDCORP



MICHAEL LASZ

PRO RETAIL FOR ALL

The art of retail has taken a battering lately, so we think it's time to celebrate the stayers, the players and those doing it right. First up in this series is Melbourne's Soundcorp, long known for their B2B and install business, but also running a designer showroom and healthy online presence. Jason Allen dropped in to talk sales, service and support....

Soundcorp's showroom and offices sit at 2/570 City Road, South Melbourne, in the heartland of the post-production, broadcast and pro audio sales industries. Started out in 1989 in the backstreets of Collingwood, Victoria this August 14 will see them turn 25. Despite being old hands in the studio and installation game, it was only in September 2006 that they opened a retail space for the pro audio buying public.

Michael Lasz, General Manager of Soundcorp, spoke about the origins of the store. "Back in 2005, we were growing out of our home with Rutledge AV in Northcote" Michael recalled. "We picked South Melbourne because it's the heart of the music industry and it's also close to the freeway. At the time, we were mainly dealing business to business and online wasn't really happening yet. The Showroom was an extension and natural progression for our growing business."

Sound Design

Michael travels extensively for business, attending trade shows and visiting suppliers globally. On his travels, he took careful note of the state of retail in other countries. "We wanted to do it right. I travelled round the world and to a lot of retailers in the US and Europe. A lot of them are huge, but they all had a musical instrument focus. We just wanted to

BY JASON ALLEN

concentrate on what we do best; pro audio, studio and broadcast. I took a few elements from everything I looked at and gave it to Werner Schicker from D3 Designs. There were two or three versions, and they nailed what we wanted to achieve."

The result is one of the sleekest retail spaces in the industry. The shop is organised into sections, including headphones, microphones, mixers and accessories. Separate from the main show floor is the isolated, floating floored, acoustically designed Sweet Spot, a custom-built listening room for monitor and loudspeaker evaluation. Said to have cost as much as the rest of the shop put together, The Sweet Spot was designed by acoustic consultants Peter Brown & Associates, who have also designed rooms for the ABC. Typical of Peter Brown designs, the Sweet Spot's eye-catching centre piece is the Schroeder diffuser built in to the back wall. It's an impressive sight, but sounds even better, giving the room a flat response perfect for monitor evaluation.

On the Floor

And there are a lot of monitors to evaluate. The Sweet Spot is well stocked with Adam, Yamaha, KRK, Dynaudio, JBL, Genelec and Mackie all set up for evaluation. The room also has a healthy collection of P.A. speakers from JBL, Yamaha, Mackie and RCF to audition, with the new RCF range set to come in for demo this month. The Sweet Spot also houses Soundcorp's premium digital mixer offerings from DiGiCo, AVID, Yamaha and Soundcraft. "We've just ordered the new AVID S6" added Michael, "which is something you won't see in many showrooms. The brands that we offer, we want to

do them justice. That's why for most of our brands we're preferred dealer or often win 'Dealer of the Year'."

On Record

Retail Manager Richard King keeps an eye on the store. Richard relocated to Australia from the UK in 2008, studying at South Melbourne's SAE. With a background in retail that included the UK's Powerhouse and BMW, plus JB HiFi, Richard is a self-confessed 'seller'. I asked what he found unique about working in an environment like Soundcorp. "We get a wide variety of people coming in" answered Richard, "everything from the top-end professionals in broadcast, recording and live sound, right down to students and your Average Joe that wants to record a bit at home. That's one of the things that's interesting now; it's not just the people who are in the know and trained, audio has become much more accessible. It's a challenge in a good way as you have to deal with people of all levels of expertise."

It's this 'prosumer' market that drives the unit volume in today's retail landscape. "Studio monitors are our biggest shifters." Noted Richard. "Second to that are computer audio interfaces. There are a lot of people who come in and buy something for a few hundred bucks that's basic but gives you a couple of microphone inputs. Home recording gear in particular is a massive part of what we do in the shop."

Production Line

Richard keeps a close eye on demand and noted a convergence in the market that Soundcorp could take advantage of. "After about year of being here I said we

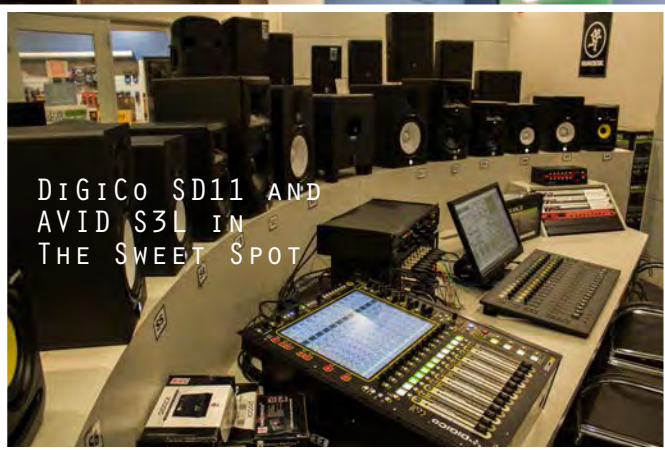


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DIGICO SD11 AND
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MICROPHONE HEAVEN



RICHARD KING

should do more music production equipment. The whole recording/production/DJ areas have merged into one. We have a lot more production equipment now like Ableton's Push, NI's Maschine, Korg synths and controller keyboards. Recording live instruments is still a big part of the market, but there's a lot more software-based and sequenced production, as well as hybrids of both."

With its heritage at the top-end of the market, Soundcorp has retained its pro customers with specialised staff and by holding stock of commercial equipment "The professional customers are coming in for digital consoles and top-end studio monitors" said Richard, "as well as solution equipment like MADI bridges and networked audio. Down here in retail, we sometimes cross over with the installation and AV teams upstairs."

Level Playing Field

In an environment which has seen a lot of retailers close their doors in the last few tough years, how do Soundcorp retain their profitability? "We stay competitive by staying on top of pricing and service" offered Richard. "Service plays a big part; we get back to people quickly, offer help and suggest alternatives. It's easy to have the cheapest price, and there will always be people who buy on that, but as long as we're close in price, our strength is that we're knowledgeable about what we sell and go to the extra effort to help people as best we can."



BRING
THE BEATS



STACK 'EM HIGH

Michael Lasa has weathered the GFC and all the doom and gloom over the last few years with a diversified, flexible and realistic view of trading. He identifies price erosion as one of the industry trends changing retail. "Products have become cheaper, so you have to sell more of them" stated Michael simply. "You're now exposing your prices online, and customers can see that. A lot of customers still value support and look past the cheapest price. What it has done is created price parity across the world. If a customer can see something a lot cheaper in another country, that customer isn't afraid to buy it anymore. As long as you offer a fair price, customers prefer to have peace of mind having local support and expertise."

Gear Acquisition Syndrome

Far from complaining about the new environment, Michael welcomes it. "It's opened us up" he admitted. "We were more 'premium' but some new brands and products have put us into different price points and clientele. Everyone's gotta start somewhere! And it's a habit, an expensive habit! I've got lots of friends in the industry who come here and they say 'Every time I come here, I spend more' and I say 'I'm not forcing you, it's your own addiction!'"

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News from NAB

LISTEN HERE

DON'T LISTEN TO ME – BUT IF YOU DO,

One thing I've experienced a fair bit lately in the world of mixing is a phenomenon I call 'oversteer'!

ADD SALT

Oversteer usually occurs when a less experienced mix engineer seeks the advice of a 'mixing guru' about one of their work-in-progress mixes. What happens next is very hard to advise against: they take their guru's (often well meaning) advice as gospel truth, and before you know it they've over-corrected their mix into a wall.

Sometimes things get very ugly when this happens, leaving both the guru and apprentice with a difficult task on their hands to rectify the situation.

LET'S CALL HIM 'BOB'

Now I'm no guru, that's for sure – I feel like an apprentice most days it must be said – but I've experienced this phenomenon a lot lately... from the Guru's perspective. This is a frustrating role at times because, like most good engineers, I'm always happy to help people with their work, but obviously I can't be there every time my advice is put into practise. Nor can I simply take over proceedings whenever I feel like it – even though it would sometimes be quicker I suspect.

When people walk out my studio door, hang up the phone after a conversation with me or read my articles, I'm resigned to the fact that some of what I've said is going to be misconstrued, misunderstood, or exaggerated out of all proportion.

So my first piece of advice in this issue of CX – which hopefully can't be bent out of shape – is simply this: when it comes to mixing, the only person who can do anything to your mix that's of any great consequence is *you* – the person *inside* the stereo image. Well-meaning gurus, experienced engineers and the occasional unsolicited opinion can all help to some extent, but no-one – *no matter how insightful they might be* – can solve all your problems over a cup of tea, a biscuit and 10 minutes listening to your track.

CHINESE WHISPERS

And the reason for this is simple: the path to great mixes can't always be converted into words by gurus in the first place, let alone converted then back into deeds by a lesser skilled apprentice. Half of what a good mix engineer does involves instinct and imagination anyway; things that aren't easily explained, let alone taught. So right from the outset there's a linguistic problem at the 'front end' of this equation, followed by a translation problem at the 'back end'. By the time a conversation between a Guru and his (or her) apprentice is converted into action, its affect on your mix may be quite different to the original intention. So be wary of so-called 'gospel truths': they're hard to express, and even harder to interpret.

TAKE ONE

Take what happened to me the other week as an example. I had a song presented to me that had so many problems I scarcely knew where to start to guide the engineer through the mix. One thing was certain though; having a conversation with him about it would be a hopelessly inadequate substitute for sitting in on his next mixing session, but we forged ahead regardless. We talked about the song for an hour while a third person took notes. Three weeks later they brought the mix back to The Mill for a second listen...

ROUND TWO

Where the drum overheads had originally been too bright and far too wide they were now too dead sounding and virtually mono. Where the snare had been too low, badly tuned, and dull, it was now sound-replaced, too loud and inappropriate to the song. The main vocal, which had once been a little low, was now too loud. Guitars that had once sounded brittle were now as thick as the bass. Other sounds had been dropped altogether because I'd made reference to not liking them, while others had been re-recorded. The upside of all this was that things did now genuinely sound better, but when this second listen elicited as many comments from me as the first there was a sense in the room that this task was getting a little unwieldy and possibly beyond them.

Things did generally improve again by the third listening session but by then it was clear to me what the limitations of this project were, and that there was no point picking another 50 holes in the mix. The bass was now too low, the snare still sounded like it had been stuck on with Gaffa tape, and one of the guitars – a new overdub – was clearly too loud (last-minute overdubs often are). So I made a few (this time more guarded) comments about the mix and left them to do some final tweaks, adding a final footnote that they should 'try and listen to the song again in a few days with a new and objective ear'.

BY ANDY STEWART

MIXING VICARIOUSLY

Even though there was no doubting the fact that my advice was being heeded and the mix was improving, many of the changes were still suffering from oversteer. It was all starting to feel like I was mixing the song via remote control... badly... like the musical equivalent of asking the engineer to hop in his car, FaceTime video call me on his iPhone, drive off and get me to advise him which way to steer based on what I could see via the iPhone camera... an accident waiting to happen to be sure.

Even though I had been at pains to point out on several occasions during these listening sessions that anything I said about the mix should only be considered as 'friendly advice' rather than a sermon from the mount to be followed religiously or blindly, to some extent or other the latter was happening anyway. I'd tried to be very explicit in explaining that if I were in front of the multitrack file and able to interrogate the various elements myself, my opinion about what to do to the mix might be quite different. But this warning fell on deaf ears.

I've seen this happen time and again, and I can only reiterate my earlier comment: People solicit advice from here, there and everywhere, hoping to find detailed, (some might say 'prophetic') solutions to their mix conundrums, and when this happens most mixes typically lurch from one over-reaction to another, rather than finding their own path. Hopefully the upside here is that a lot is being learnt during the process, and that can only be a good thing, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's good for the mix.

DON'T GET MYOPIC

Oversteer is all about getting too obsessed with the advice you're given at the expense of keeping a macroscopic eye on the bigger picture. When I hear statements like, "Yeah, I really heard what you said the other day about the bottom-end so this time I really focussed in on everything below 100Hz!" I start to get really concerned.

Mixing is predominantly about *balance*. If your focus is on a group of frequencies in particular, or a phrase like 'super fat', then as a balance engineer, I'd immediately be concerned that you're getting caught up in semantics and ultimately missing the point. There should never be a focus on a group of frequencies at the expense of all others – well, not for long anyway. It's all about proportion, not imbalance and exaggerated hyperbole.

So please take whatever advice you're given – including this article – with a healthy grain of salt. By all means heed the advice of others if it seems pertinent, but whatever you do, don't replace your own thinking, your own ability to interrogate the mix, your own listening skills with the opinions of others that aren't even in the room. No-one who offers their opinion would want or expect you to do that. Chances are they'd probably have something different to say anyway if they were standing over your shoulder listening to the multitrack. They may for instance decide that their earlier advice to you about turning up that vocal 3dB is now probably more like 1.5, and now the snare needs to drop too... and down the rabbit hole we go!

There are just too many ramifications and knock-on effects of changing one or two elements in a mix for you to stop listening or trusting your instincts. I don't care where the advice comes from; never stop listening and judging things for yourself.

Hey, maybe your Guru is spot on with his or her advice... but only you can be the judge of that.

Andy Stewart owns and operates The Mill in Victoria; a world class production and mastering facility. He's happy to respond to any pleas for recording, mixing or mastering help... contact him at: andy@themill.net.au



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INSIGHT INTO DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING FOR V-DOSC REPLACEMENT

Raymond Rogers is an American Grammy Award winning Live Audio Engineer and Production Manager whose impressive credits include J Cole, Kid Cudi, Hit Boy, Jurassic 5, Donald Lawrence and The Clark Sisters (for which he won a Grammy for engineering the 2007 live album "Live - One Last Time").

This interview picks up in Melbourne at the Rapture Festival, a few weeks after Raymond returned from FoH Engineering and Production Managing the 22 date European leg of the "J Cole - What Dreams May Come Tour", where in London at the famous HMV Hammersmith Apollo, he is given the keys of a L'Acoustics K2 rig to work with.



Raymond Rogers,
grammy award winning
live audio engineer

J-IW: Hi Ray. Thank you for taking the time out to chat about your recent experiences with the new L'Acoustics K2 system. Firstly, I want to read these snippets from John Aizlewood's review of the 1 December J Cole concert, in the London Evening Standard:

"(J Cole's) She Knows saw Cole's Nas-esque vocals combine with a dazzling light show and pristine sound to take live hip-hop to another level" and "as he left Cole promised to play the O2 in 2014. Frankly, on this showing, he might as well book it now".

Reviews like this must make you very happy. Has the reception for this tour been similar everywhere you have been?

RR: Yes.

J-IW: Including the September - November United States leg, what variety of FoH rigs have you been given for this tour?

RR: D&B J Series, L'Acoustics Kudo, K1, and V Dosc, EV X Line

J-IW: So, you are coming from a wide field of products from the one tour. How did it come about you were given the K2 for London? As the product is not commercially available yet, is this something SSE offered you as an option?

RR: When planning a tour, I pre advance all production for shows. When it came to advancing London, Yan Stile, Director of The SSE Audio Group

BY JAMES INSTRELL-WALKER

Ltd. (UK), reached out and asked would I like to use the new K2 system by L'Acoustics. Sure, why not is my answer. I have worked on many PA systems designed by L'Acoustics and didn't mind working on something new. They wanted to hit the market majorly.

J-IW: Can you go through the day step by step? How was the load in and set-up. Were there any hiccups? Was there much getting used to the box or was it as plug and play as the official L'Acoustics website claims?

RR: The system is light and very easy to rig. After the audio crew received rigging points it took them no longer than a hour to get the system rigged and in the air. The system is pretty much plug and play.

J-IW: Did you get the same rig for any of the other parts of the UK leg?

RR: Three nights at Hammersmith Apollo London (capacity 4500) and two nights at O2 Apollo Manchester (capacity 3484).

J-IW: To paraphrase a quote from the official L'Acoustics website "With K2, L'ACOUSTICS offers K1 performance at a rescaled package. The K2 system flexibility makes it suited ~ to applications from theatre to stadium productions". As you mentioned, the Odeon is a 4,500 capacity venue and the Apollo is similarly sized at 3,484. both fitting into the "Theatre" application, how did it fare and how does it compare to the Kudo system, which is also suitable for the same size venues.

RR: The K2 have a better throw than the KUDO. Of course it is a larger box than the KUDO with more components to accomplish the throw needed. I love both boxes per their design and the wave pattern guards built into both boxes is a plus in the audio world. With the software included with L'Acoustics PA, all their boxes are pretty on point when you fly and tune the rig to their specs.

J-IW: L'Acoustics have indicated that K2 will replace V-DOSC in that they will discontinue manufacture of the aging speaker (although still maintain support of the product). Do you think K2 is a worthy replacement for their signature product? Does it go beyond V-DOSC?

RR: The K2 is a great replacement for the V-DOSC rig. I notice that L'Acoustics will use old ideas from their past rigs and combined certain characteristics with newer design to make a box that will please engineers in a live audio world.

J-IW: Ray, Thank you for sharing your experiences in road testing the L'Acoustics K2. Meanwhile, back in London, Yan Stile is the Hire Director of UK Audio production company SSE Audio Group. SSE are one of three companies chosen to partner with L'Acoustics in their K2 pilot phase (The other two being Black Box Music in Germany and Concept Even in France. Yan, can you give some background or history to your involvement with L'Acoustics products and the story leading to SSE being a part of the K2 Pilot phase? When did the pilot phase start? Is it still ongoing or has it effectively ended now that sale units have started to roll out the factory?



Mamma Mia - Amici Productions/Auckland Music Theatre Inc. Lighting Design by Nik Janiurek

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James Sacca, Novatech's Project Manager & Audio Head of Department



YS: We were thrilled to be asked to be part of the pilot program back in mid 2013. The first outing for the system from us was at the V Festival twin sites of Chelmsford and Weston Park in Staffordshire where we deployed the system as delays for both B stages.

J-IW: What are the key advantages for a production company having K2 in their inventory.

YS: Coming in at 56 kilos and with all the advantages of it's state of the art design, having a system that can be deployed in every venue around Europe will be of great advantage. We are tapered over here with weight restrictions in so many of our smaller venues. This new system will address this problem together with it's ability to be used in the largest venues. I see it's potential as being absolutely huge.

J-IW: Was there any feedback sent to L'Acoustics from your testing that resulted in any tweaks or changes or has it been pretty much ready for use from the first day? Perhaps some software tweaks?

YS: There have been some very small changes to the rigging side of things but in essence, the production box is as delivered to us last Summer.

In addition to J Cole, SSE utilised the K2 for Union J,

**Yan Stile,
Hire Director of
UK audio production
company SSE**



Arctic Monkeys and the BBC Proms in Hyde Park. For the Arctic Monkeys autumn arena tour, K2 was used to supplement the K1 main hang.

Finally, I spoke to SSE Project Manager, Dan Bennett. "They were playing to a full 220 degrees coverage in arenas, so we chose to use K2 as a side hang and L'Acoustics KARA for the rear hang. Using the K series for everything meant the sound was the same everywhere. When you have V-DOSC side hangs, it's very noticeable walking across the arena between the K1 and V-DOSC coverage. The K2 really improves our inventory as K1 is sometimes too costly to have as side hangs, plus the fact it's not always wide enough. With K2, it's light, easy to fly, sounds like K1 and can cover a spread of 110°, increasing coverage over a standard side hang." Back home on Australian shores, no one is more excited about the advent of the K2 than Adelaide Production company Novatech, who stock over 300 cabinets covering almost every speaker in the L-Acoustics Range. Anticipating their first delivery is project manager, Audio Head of Department, James Sacca.

J-IW: When was Novatech first introduced to the K2 System?

JS: The K2 system is something we have had our eye on with the intention to purchase even during its very early development stages. Both Milenko Novakovic (Novatech Co-Owner/Technical Director) and myself attended the 2013 Pro Light + Sound in Frankfurt for the sole purpose of attending the official launch of the product.

J-IW: What encouraged you to purchase the new system?

JS: There has been a position for a speaker of this size and configuration in our inventory for quite some time. Wanting to remain heavily devoted to the L'Acoustics brand combined with the growing need to fulfil multiple stadium/arena shows makes the K2 system the obvious choice. The KUDO product has served us well since purchasing our first system in 2006, however the scale of events that we are now involved in demands a larger

box. We had considered going down the V-DOSC line some time ago, however as it was fast becoming a Legacy product we made the decision to hold off for the newer replacement system. The 56kg weight of the box is also a huge win for us, making it suited to various venues around the country that other large format arrays have previously been too heavy for.

J-IW: When do you expect the new system to arrive?

JS: The system will be arriving in the next couple of months well ready for the start of the 2014/15 summer/festival period. We will be one of the first in the country to receive the product.

James Instrell-Walker is the technical manager of Jiro Stage, a South Australian based staging company, who sees his interest in understanding audio, as well as lighting and video innovation, as an important component to fulfilling his role in large scale outdoor festivals.

K2 Specifications

The K2 loudspeaker enclosure is based on a 3-way active design.

It comprises 4 input sections: 2 LF and 1 MF at a nominal impedance of 8 ohms, and 1 HF at a nominal impedance of 16 ohms. It features two 12" speakers and four 6.5", all direct-radiating neodymium speakers mounted in a bass-reflex enclosure, and two 3" neodymium diaphragm compression drivers coupled to individual DOSC waveguides and adjustable directivity fins.

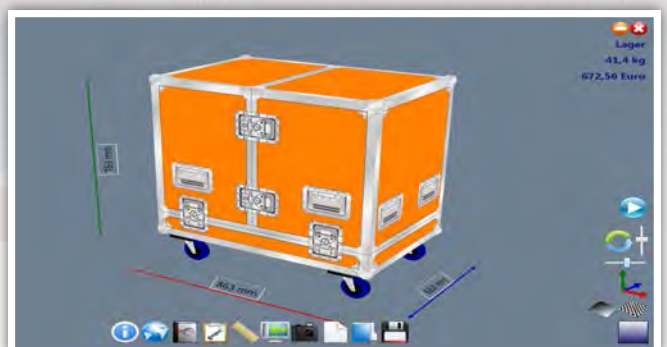
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WHAT-IF?

What If we have a hoist that has an identity crisis?

IN JULY LAST YEAR WE TOUCHED ON THE TOPIC OF ADDING A SECOND BRAKE TO A GENERIC INDUSTRIAL GRADE CHAIN HOIST (D8 COMPLIANT OR EQUIVALENT) TO MAKE IT "SAFER", AND THIS TOPIC HAS REARED ITS UGLY HEAD AGAIN HERE IN THE WORLD-OF-EXPLAINING-CHAIN-HOIST-COMPLIANCE.

It started with a fairly innocuous conversation with a potential client who was looking to fly a 1,000kg load and didn't want to fit safety tethers.

Nothing fancy required, no special group stops or multi point lifts, no performers hanging off trusses, no moving loads over the audience - just lift a speaker cluster for a show without needing to send someone "up there" to tether the load off before the punters or crew can walk under the cluster.

We quoted said client for basic, no-frills, fixed speed, 1,000kg D8+ hoists, compatible with existing control gear, and got ready for the normal discussions regarding price and "special" discounts.

It was a bit of a surprise then when we were informed that "other" brands of "identical" chain hoists are of the order of half the cost of the machines that we had suggested. This was a little more than someone being enthusiastic about margins or optimistic about exchange rates so we dug a little deeper.

It turns out that the "identical" hoists that our humble 1,000kg D8+ machines were being compared to were in fact 1,000kg D8 machines that are set up for a second (optional) brake, and were being presented as "Dual Compliance" machines that can be used as D8+ (with a load of 500kg and the optional second brake fitted).

The perception was that because the documentation presented for these "other" hoists stated "D8+" that

the hoist could be used to lift 1,000kg and not require a tether before allowing people under the load.

We explained (tried to, at least) that the machines were genuine D8+ machines only when the overload clutch was set to operate for a load of 500kg and a second brake was fitted (with the second brake circuit arranged for staggered application of the brakes). If the overload clutch was left set to operate for a load of 1,000kg, then no matter how many extra brakes were fitted, that the hoist would only ever be a D8 machine.

The jury is still out as to whether this explanation fell on deaf ears or not, but we tried.

The article we published in June last year examined the dangers of adding a second brake without a control circuit that ensures that the 2 brakes can never apply simultaneously, and this has significant implications when we look at the concept of "Dual Compliance" hoists.

A hoist which is designed to arrest and hold a load of 1,000kg will have a brake of double the torque (braking capacity) of a hoist designed to arrest and hold a load of 500kg.


When we add a second brake to this 1,000kg hoist, without the appropriate brake timing circuit, then we have a (set of) brake(s) with 4 times the torque required to arrest and hold a 500kg load.

D8+ hoists have a chain Factor of Safety that is double that of a D8 hoist, but this dramatically increased braking torque effectively negates this higher Factor of Safety.

Doubling the brake capacity of a hoist does not necessarily improve the safety of the hoist.

A D8 hoist with a second brake fitted is not a D8+ hoist - it is a D8 hoist with an extra brake, and that extra brake may well be compromising the safety of the hoist.

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.



BY ANDREW MATHIESON

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QL-series consoles feature large touch-panel displays and "Touch & Turn" knobs that make up a remarkably smooth, efficient control interface.



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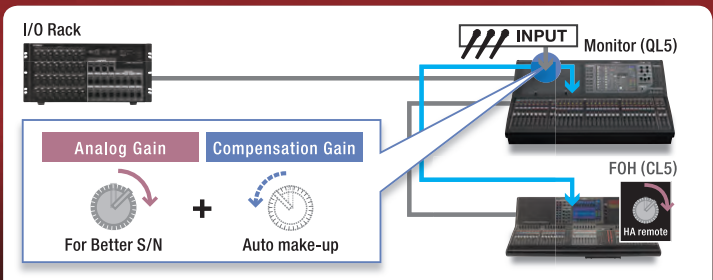
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Special versions of Rupert Neve Portico 5043 and 5033 EQ's and compressors plus Dan Dugan Sound Design automatic microphone mixing are included in every QL.



Capable Systems with Fewer Devices

The ability to directly connect input ports to output ports without going through mixing channels provides unprecedented freedom for routing signals between the analog, Dante and MY slot inputs and outputs. For example, a QL could be used as an i/o device for another QL or CL whilst simultaneously functioning as a monitor console.



I/O Rack Sharing without Gain Complications

When sharing inputs between multiple consoles, gain adjustments made from one console could potentially disrupt the mix balance at another. With QL, Gain Compensation is automatically applied at the digital stage so that the total gain sent out via the network remains constant.



QL1

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16 + 2 fader configuration in a compact, rack mountable unit.

- Mix channels: 32 mono, 8 stereo.
- Busses: 16 mix, 8 matrix (Input to Matrix supported).
- Local I/O: 16 in, 8 out.
- Fader configuration: 16 + 2 (Master).
- Rack mountable with optional RK1 Rack Mount Kit.



QL5

64 mono / 8 stereo 16 mixes / 8 matrices

32 + 2 fader configuration adapts to a wide range of channel layouts. The QL5 is a compact console with large-scale capabilities.

- Mix channels: 64 mono, 8 stereo.
- Busses: 16 mix, 8 matrix (Input to Matrix supported).
- Local I/O: 32 in, 16 out.
- Fader configuration: 32 + 2 (Master).
- Stainless steel iPad support stays.

To arrange a demonstration of the new QL-series digital mixing console at your facility, please contact Yamaha Music Australia's commercial audio team by emailing mick_hughes@gmx.yamaha.com

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Alternatively, Yamaha Music Australia will be conducting regular QL- and CL-series training sessions throughout ENTECH CONNECT, 23rd-24th July at the Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne. Please email mick_hughes@gmx.yamaha.com to register your interest.

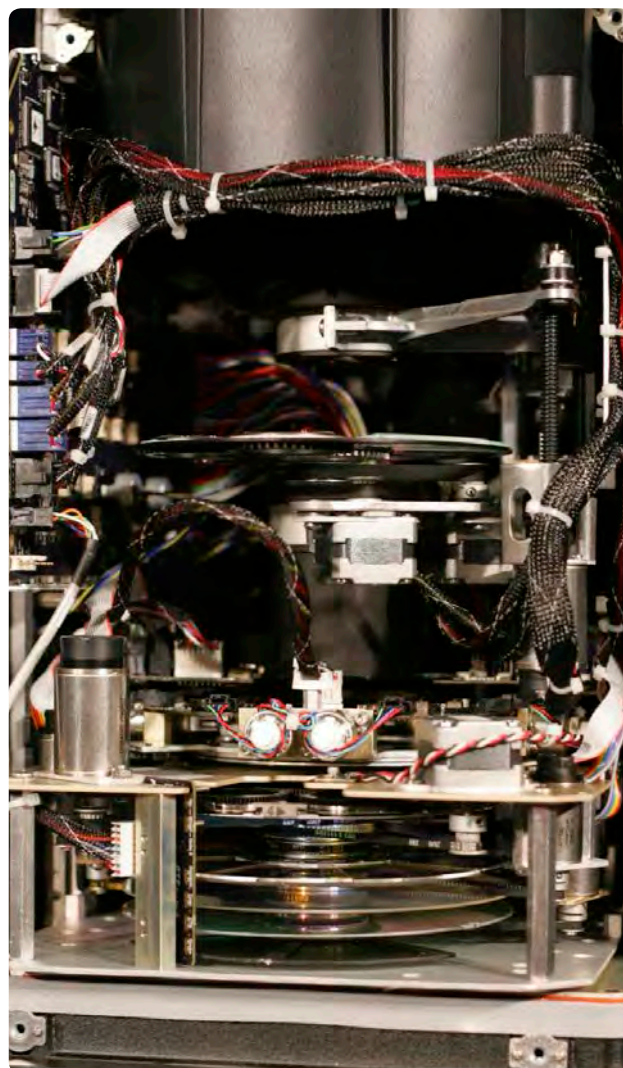
PRG BEST BOY 4000

DEFINITELY NOT FOR RESIDENTIAL USE...

BY JIMMY DEN-OUDEM



THE FIRST THING TO KNOW ABOUT THE BEST BOY 4000 IS THAT IT'S NOT A ONE PERSON LIFT. THE FIXTURE WEIGHS CLOSE TO 50KG, SO WHEN IT ARRIVED IN A DUAL ROADCASE WE DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO LIFT IT ONTO THE DOCK. JASON AND I WRANGLING THE FIXTURE INTO THE STUDIO AND PROCEEDED TO FIRE IT UP.



To my surprise it was far quieter than I was expecting. Really quiet. For something so brutally heavy, the operation is comically dainty by comparison. The lamp inside the Best Boy 4000 is a 700W MSR 700SA, and the spec is 20,000 Lumen output. Which is heaps from a fixture which only pulls 4.5A at 240V – that was another big surprise. I was expecting to trip breakers when I lamped it on, and happily it didn't happen.

PowerCon, XLR and EtherCon connectors provide power and control connectivity, and each side of the fixture base has a three section carry handle. Additional handles are located at the top of each side of the yoke for "easier" handling. Our test fixture came with dual safety wires attached to the base handles, and that worries me a bit. I don't know how the apparently cast handles would hold up to a sudden point load if the fixture dropped – there really should be a dedicated safety line attachment point, especially a fixture this heavy.



The user interface on the Best Boy 4000 is an LCD touch screen, and it is categorically the most user intuitive, beautiful interface I've ever seen on a moving light. Or any light. The screen is huge, so all the info you need to see is right there on the main page at a glance. Want to lamp on? Press the lamp icon. Want to change the DMX address? Just tap it then type in the new address and press enter. The fixture uses exactly 45 DMX or Artnet channels for control, with no short-form protocol available. A selection of preset macros allows you to call up various beam effects quickly, and these override whatever manual selection has been made.

Not content with replicating the common ranges for pan and tilt, PRG has equipped Best Boy 4000 with 615 degree pan. Tilt is limited to 260 degrees, and I think this is a function of the size of the head itself – it's pretty damn big, but then considering it houses just about every conceivable beam function you can think of that's not entirely unreasonable. I really do mean every function too – here's the list: CMY colour wheels, designer colour wheel, CT adjustment, 2x rotatable indexable gobo wheels, prism & frost, zoom, iris, beam edge adjustment (think edge focus), strobe, and rotatable four shutter framing assembly. No kitchen sink, but just about everything else.

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While pan and tilt isn't especially fast, it is pretty quiet. The zoom range is 8 to 64 degrees, and even out wide the beam is quite flat. The "moiré" gobos are great and the Best Boy 4000 has enough output to yield punchy bold beams even after dialing in a bunch of beam modifiers. I think PRG has spent a fair bit of time getting the optics of the thing right, because it feels like it has a much bigger lamp inside than reality tells us. Maybe the fact the unit is "hire only" is so they can keep the units running to spec on every job. It's not a bad theory actually.

I guess the best way to sum it up is that it's a bit like my big DSLR camera & lens combo. It's heavy, and as

much as carrying it around is a right pain in the arse, at the end of the day you really can't argue with the output quality that good optics provide.



BRAND: PRG
 MODEL: BEST BOY 4000
 RRP: N/A – ONLY FOR HIRE.
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SHURE LENSHPPPER HOP TO IT...

BY JIMMY DEN-ouden

DLSR CAMERAS HAVE MATURED INTO A GREAT, AFFORDABLE WAY TO PRODUCE BEAUTIFUL QUALITY VIDEO. UNFORTUNATELY, THE SOUND ON THEM USUALLY DOESN'T QUITE COME UP TO THE SAME LEVEL. COMMONLY IN FACT, IT SUCKS. IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SHURE CAME UP WITH A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.



SHURE VP83



SHURE VP83F

The VP83 is a teeny weeny little shotgun mic which mounts to the top of your DSL camera via the hot-shoe. Simple idea, but not necessarily an easy one to get right...

Two versions of the mic are available. The VP83 is essentially the mic with a little pre-amp and an output cable. Two switches on the back of the unit control power, low cut, and gain (0dB, 10dB

pad or 20dB boost). The mic is powered by a single AA battery, stated to yield up to 130 hours of operation. A short link lead included in the package allows you to plug it into the mic input on the camera.

The VP83F takes the audio capture process out of the camera, with the inclusion of an integrated digital recording facility. Again, audio pass-through to the camera is supported with a link cable, plus there's a headphone port for monitoring. Audio is recorded to MicroSDHC card in 24 bit 48kHz WAV format. Starting and stopping the record is done by the rear mount control panel, with a dedicated function button. Another button takes care of power, and the familiar Shure type "joystick" looks after other functions, with visual feedback from a backlit LCD screen.

The menu system is pretty logical and straightforward – you can adjust mic gain by up to 60dB in 1dB increments. There's a low-cut filter, as well as track management and playback functions. Understandably, all this action requires a little more power so the VP83F uses two AA batteries which provide up to 10 hours use when recording (presumably more when just passing audio through to the camera).

The VP83F is a little heavier than the VP83, and tends to pull the balance of the camera forward a bit more as a consequence. Still, it was not enough to worry me. Both mic assemblies are



VP83 EASY CONTROLS



OBVIOUSLY YOU NEED A CARD
INSERTED TO RECORD

mounted using a "Lyre" system, developed by Rycote (shock mount gurus) exclusively for the VP83 series. Because the mic is directional, it points slightly downward to try and focus the pattern in front of the lens, rather than above it. Looks weird, but makes a lot of sense. While a standard foam type windsock is included in the pack, there's also a Rycote Windjammer option available for serious outdoor use.

So how do they sound? Pretty damn good actually. The VP83 series doesn't yield the same performance and pattern control of a VP89L, but looking at the performance in the context of price they're actually very good. They make the difference between in-camera audio recording being a simple guide-track, and actual usable audio.



VP83 WITH EXTRA FLUFF

BRAND: SHURE
MODEL: VP83 SERIES
RRP: VP83 \$299.00 INC GST.
VP83F \$499.00 INC GST.
PRODUCT INFO: WWW.SHURE.COM
DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.JANDS.COM.AU

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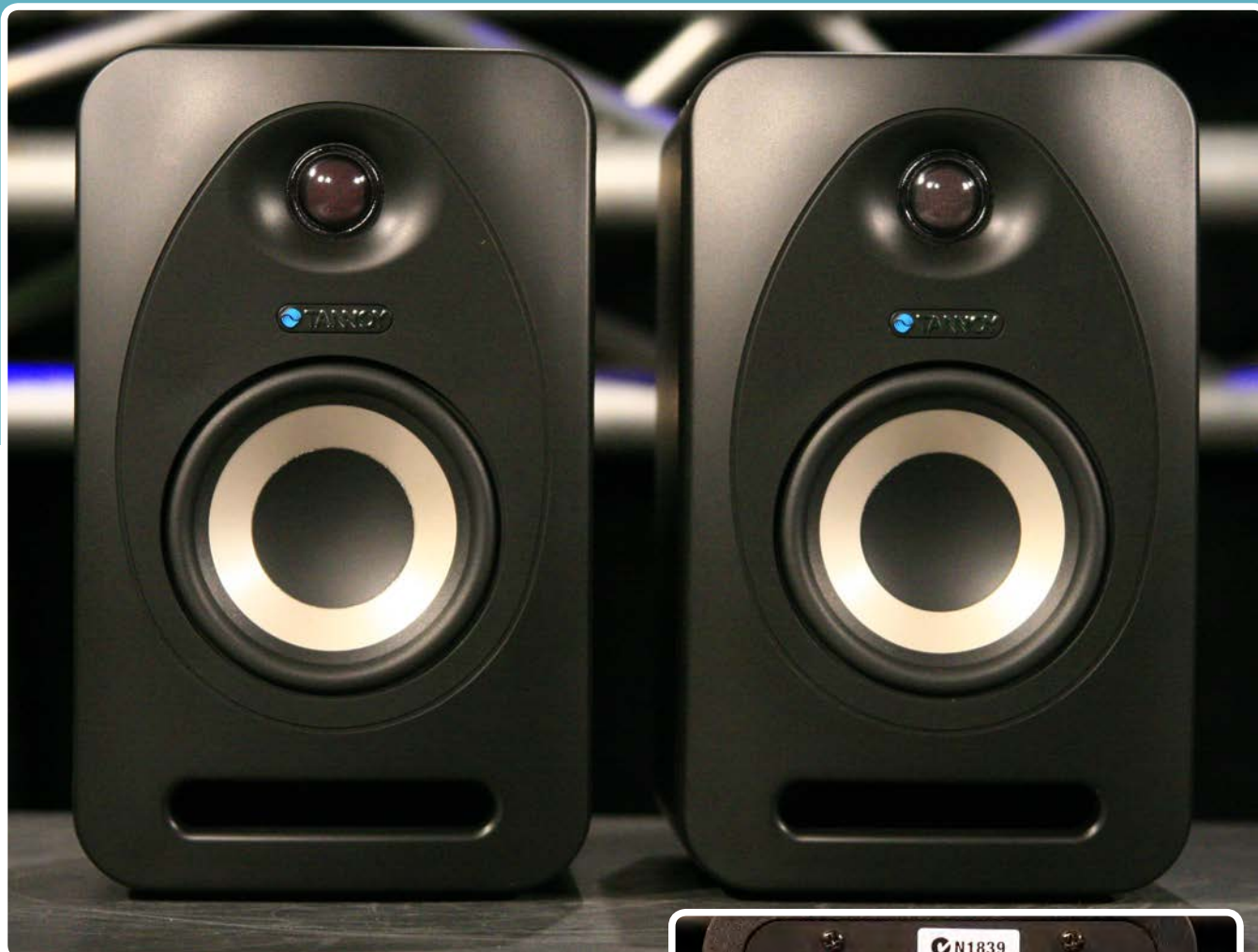
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TANNOY REVEAL 402

GOOD THINGS, TINY PACKAGES.

BY JIMMY DEN-ODEN



THE REVEAL 402S TURNED UP AT THE CX BUNKER ONE DAY QUIETLY AND WITHOUT A FUSS. TRUTH WAS I'D FORGOTTEN I ASKED FOR THEM. BUT WHAT A HAPPY MOMENT OF ABSENT MINDEDNESS IT WAS, BECAUSE IT TURNS OUT THEY'RE DARLING LITTLE THINGS.

The Reveal 402 is a bi-amplified compact studio monitor with a 4" LF/Mid driver and a 3/4" soft dome tweeter. The RMS output of the amplifier module is 50W, with half of this going to each driver (25W RMS per driver). It doesn't sound like a lot of power, and it's not. Fortunately, one thing Tannoy has always done really well is build very efficient speakers. This means little power in, lots of sound out.

The spec on the Reveal 402 is 56Hz – 48kHz, and I'm sure in some way they get there, but probably not at unity across that range. Low frequency extension is about as good as you could reasonably expect



from 4" drivers. They don't get down low and growl the same way as my regular monitors, but at a third the box volume that's not unexpected. Mids are present without being overbearing. Vocals sound rich and full. There are all sorts of harmonic based arguments about why HF frequency response needs to extend beyond that of human ears, though personally I'm not sure the Nyquist theorem applies to speakers. Regardless of the spec, top end is good, and perhaps this lends to another point I'll get to later on.



them. It's the most brutal form of limiting I've ever heard, but very effective. How much level do you get before this happens? Time to find out. I managed to sustain a comfortable 88dBa (slow response) in my studio at the listening position – about a metre away from the boxes. The 101dB SPL claim is probably valid for brief transients, though to be totally fair I was listening to a pretty tightly compressed dance track – more dynamic transients are better accommodated. Anyway they're more than capable of producing SPL required for their intended application – desktop monitoring.

To my ears, these boxes represent a move away from the low-mid "warmth" for which I've always known Tannoy. The Reveal 402 is different – less pronounced in this region, more neutral and in some way more modern. It looks more modern too – the charcoal exterior is punctuated by the silver woofer cone and a very new look Tannoy badge. Round the back are inputs for power and audio. You can input audio via balanced XLR, unbalanced jack, or even stereo mini-jack. When using the mini-jack input, just link two 402s together with the supplied cable, then flip a switch on each box to choose which is left and which is right. It's designed to make life easy for those using just a laptop. An HF boost/cut switch, power switch and input attenuator complete the back panel.

The Reveal 402s are a compact pair of near-field monitors, and as such a thing in its own right, I rate them as competent. That in itself justifies the fairly modest price tag. But here's the kicker – the stereo image out of the Reveals is insanely great. I don't know what the hell Tannoy has done to achieve this, but it works extremely well. I reckon these things are a hot contender for bargain of the year.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY?

When you push the Reveal 402s for too much level, they cut-out. I've never seen a studio monitor do this, and for a brief moment I thought I might have broken



BRAND: TANNOY
 MODEL: REVEAL 402
 RRP: \$499.00 INC GST PER PAIR
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.TANNOY.CO.UK
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.AMBERTECH.COM.AU

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ROBE ROBIN 800 LEDWASH WELCOME TO THE FAMILY...

BY JIMMY DEN-ouden

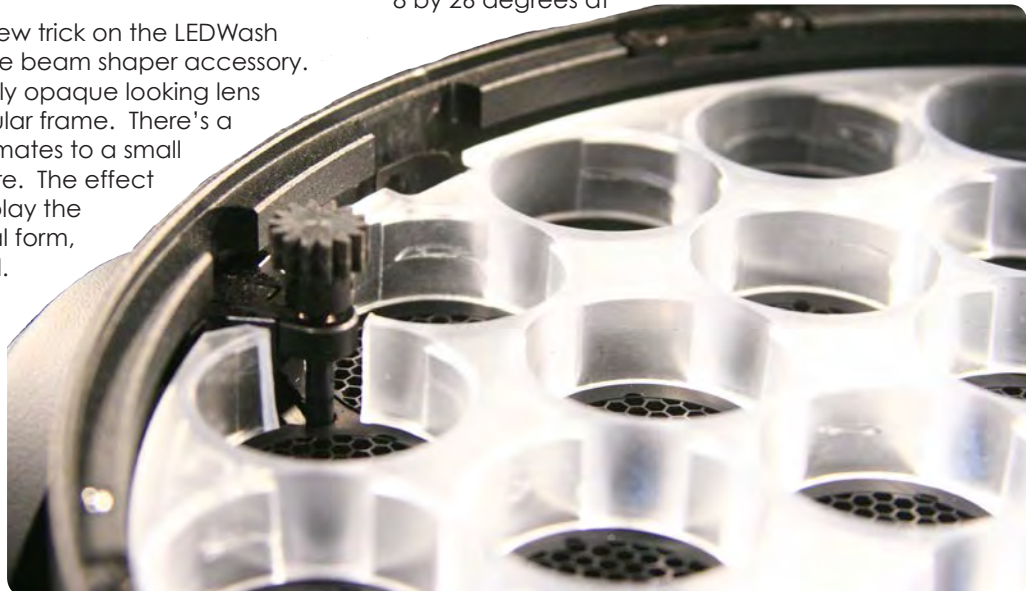
THE ROBE LEDWASH FAMILY IS PRETTY WELL ESTABLISHED NOW, HAVING BEEN AROUND FOR SEVERAL YEARS. THE BASIC RANGE HAS INCLUDED THE 300, 600 AND 1200 AS WELL AS A FEW WHITE ONLY AND NON-MOVING VARIATIONS. THE 800 LEDWASH IS A NEW ADDITION TO THE LINE, AND WHILE IT'S PHYSICALLY SIMILAR TO A 600 THERE ARE A FEW IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES.



First up is the source – the 600 LEDWash uses 37x 10W RGBW chips. The 800 LEDWash uses exactly the same number of chips, but they're 15W units rather than 10W. That's a decent increase, so how much more light does it get you? More is the short answer, especially at narrow beam angles. This is no doubt partly due to the narrower beam capability of the 800. If you want to compare the photometric data, Robe kindly provides this on the website. Better yet, it's set out such that you can compare fixtures under like measurement conditions.

New chips isn't the only new trick on the LEDWash 800, which has a removable beam shaper accessory. The beam shaper is a slightly opaque looking lens which rotates within a circular frame. There's a geared internal ring, which mates to a small cog in the face of the fixture. The effect of the beam shaper is to splay the beam into an asymmetrical form, which can then be rotated. Rotation is controlled by a single DMX parameter and ranges from extremely slow to moderate speeds. It's an effect we've decided is subtle at best – just enough to give the beam a slow look as though it's pulsing

but without actually changing intensity. If you don't want to use the beam shaper, push two buttons on the side of the head and it just twists off. Our test unit came with a clear, non-rotating replacement in the box. At minimum zoom, the fixture beam is normally 8 degrees circular. The beam shaper changes this to 8 by 26 degrees at





minimum zoom. Oddly enough it feels kind of like looking at a par-can beam, but only until it starts to rotate and change colour.

Talking colour, the Robe standard "virtual colour wheel" is still a feature, with 237 preset colours. You can have white light in a number of preset colour temperatures, and there's even tungsten emulation on a couple of the lower ones. Individual control over the concentric rings of LEDs is provided, as are a number of random strobe and pulse effects.

DMX512, ArtNet, MA Net, MA Net 2, and RDM are all supported with a selection of XLR and EtherCon connectors as well as wireless connection. Rigging is dual Omega brackets. Control is the familiar Robe Navigation touch screen. Most aspects of the fixture are consistent with the rest of the range, and I really like that a lot. I think the Robin 800 represents the next logical evolution of the LEDWash family.

BRAND: ROBE
 MODEL: ROBIN 800 LEDWASH
 RRP: \$11,981.00 INC GST.
 PRODUCT INFO: WWW.ROBE.CZ
 DISTRIBUTOR: WWW.ULAGROUP.COM

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REDBACK A4480 AUDIO MATRIX SWITCHER

CLOSED ARCHITECTURE, OPEN FOR BUSINESS



BY JIMMY DEN-UDEN



AS FAR AS OPEN ARCHITECTURE ARCHITECTURAL AUDIO DSP UNITS HAVE COME, THEY'RE STILL PRETTY EXPENSIVE WHEN YOU COMPARE THEM TO SOMETHING OF A FIXED PROCESSING CONFIGURATION. THEY ALSO TYPICALLY TAKE LONGER TO INSTALL DUE TO THE FACT YOU NEED TO PROGRAM THEM. IN MANY APPLICATIONS THEY'RE OVERKILL, AND SOMETHING SIMPLER IS REQUIRED.

The A4480 is an 8x8 audio matrix switcher, and it's designed to fit perfectly into the aforementioned market. Clubs, pubs, bars, shopping and function centres are typical applications where this product would be ideal.

The A4480 defies typical installation product build in the sense that the rear panel is populated with XLR and RCA connectors – not Phoenix types as found on many other install products. That makes it a little more time consuming to install, unless you want a drop-in replacement for another product with similar connections. The 8 inputs are all equipped with dual RCA, with the addition of an XLR for inputs 1 and 2 (switchable phantom power included!). All 8 zone outputs are on XLR. In addition to the line inputs, there's an emergency paging input plus an alert/evac input. Around the front are recessed trim pots for each input, with bass and treble controls for the line inputs. An LED confirms signal presence for each source, and once all the inputs are properly trimmed and adjusted, a screw-on Perspex cover discourages unwanted changes to these. The centre of the front panel has a level control for each zone output, and adjacent to these is an LCD screen which shows the routing matrix, as well as facilitating various preset and setup functions.

Choosing which source routes to which zone is done by simply pressing the zone button to step through the sources for that zone in sequence. Individual sources can be excluded from specific zones. While the A4480 stands up well on its own, it's better when you add some accessories.

A selection of wall plates allows source selection from within zones, as well as facilitating local source input. Connecting a local source to a wall plate mutes any line source already routed to that wallplates zone. Wall plates connect to the A4480 via Cat5 on a single RJ45. The local input plate just links into the back of a source or preset control plate – so there's no need to run another audio line.

A desktop paging station allows paging of one or all zones (complete with chime), and there's an emergency page everything function. The A4480 has a priority muting system, whereby the most important signals (emergency announce, alert/evac) will override any other signal.

A host of useful other connectors on the back allow for things like a USB keyboard (used to name inputs and zones on the LCD screen), and contact closures to trigger the internal chime, alert and evac tone generator. Another very appealing point about the A4480 is that the documentation is excellent – the spec sheet on the web tells you exactly what it can and can't do.

Designed and manufactured in Australia, the A4480 is backed with local service and a 10 year warranty. That's a lot to like.



BRAND: REDBACK
MODEL: A4480
RRP: A4480 - \$2250.00 INC GST.
A4485/A4490 WALL PLATES - \$299.00 INC GST.
PRODUCT INFO:
WWW.ALTRONICS.COM.AU
DISTRIBUTOR:
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May
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ROAD SKILLS


Neil Finn

Bruno Mars

Kate Miller-Heidke

Neil Finn: Photography - Troy Constable
Bruno Mars: Photography - Cory Fitzgerald
Kate Miller-Heidke: Photography - Kait Hall

Neil Finn



No pressure taking on the position of sound engineer for Neil Finn; award winner, famous singer-songwriter, band member of Split Enz and Crowded House, and all round superstar. This was what fellow Kiwi Kerry Furlong took on when he was appointed to mix FOH for Neil's Dizzy Heights world tour.

Trained at Oceania and having toured locally with international acts as a system tech, Kerry honed his skills as a FOH mixer in the US before returning to New Zealand to work for local acts.

"There are a lot of good acts in New Zealand but none in the league that Neil is in," he began. "It was a little intimidating but at the same time a buzz. Really, it was a dream come true. Neil is such a lovely guy and it's a real family atmosphere on tour, very relaxed." Surprisingly Neil has little input into how Kerry mixes his show preferring to focus on what he is doing on stage. However Kerry believes he would soon pipe up if he thought Kerry was doing something wrong.

"Fortunately we seem to be on the same page as far as the sound he wants," added Kerry. "His show is very dynamic; he's gone from the eighties dark pop songs to the more adult contemporary and then back to the darkness with Dizzy Heights. I try to make the



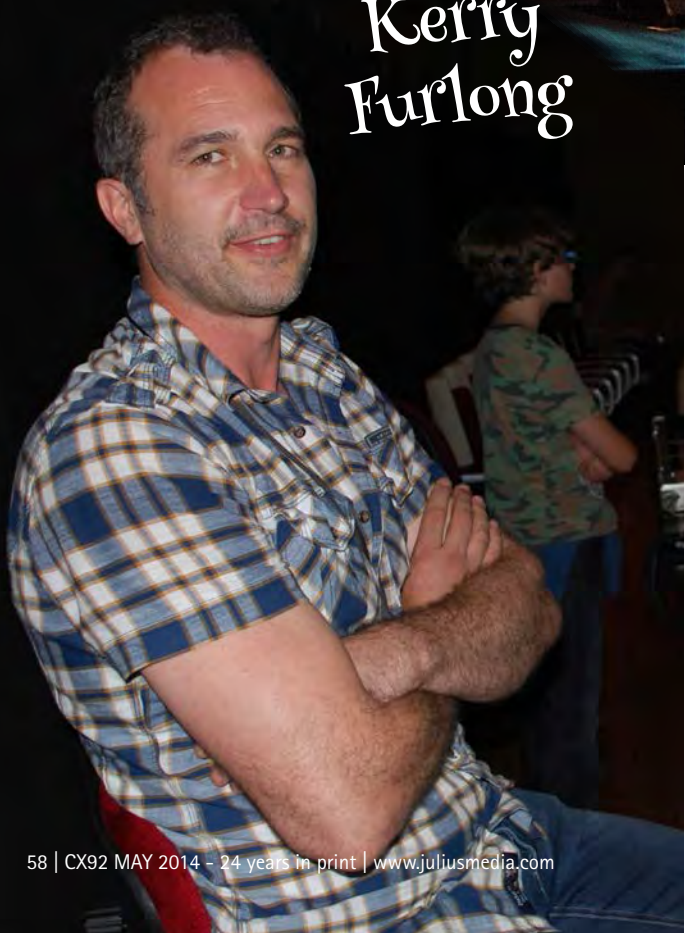
reaches Dizzy Heights

more ethereal songs, usually performed on the piano, as trippy as I can whilst with the more guitar based songs, I get quite aggressive. It's as dynamic as can be with loud passages and then quiet passages. I certainly don't like to set the levels and just sit back and let the console do the work."

A FOH package including an Avid Venue Profile console, as well as d&b audiotechnik wedges and a Yamaha PM5D console for monitors, is toured whilst the in-house PA systems are utilized at every gig. "I prefer the Avid Venue mainly for the plug-ins, especially being able to translate what I use in Pro Tools in the studio to my console and Pro Tools live," commented Kerry. "I think it is great having that option – being able to pull in those Waves plug-ins and know what my delays and reverbs are going to be like. I don't use any outboard gear however now I have got the first few shows under the belt, I may use some analogue delay soon. Otherwise it's pretty simple."

Kerry doesn't set up any cues, keeping every song as a snapshot mainly for mutes and slight fader positions as Neil often moves positions on stage. That's about as automated as he

Dizzy Heights World Tour FOH Mixer - Kerry Furlong



gets, as he believes that too much automation takes the magic out of mixing.

Whilst Kerry's preferred PA is an L'Acoustics V-Dosc he has to be satisfied with whatever he gets on this tour. The Australian leg of the tour produced a mixed bag of d&b audiotechnik, Meyer Milo and also JBL VerTec.

When it comes to monitors Neil knows what he wants and it's not too complicated, in fact it has to be one of the easiest monitor gigs currently on the road. Monitor engineer Paul Kennedy uses the d&b audiotechnik M2 wedges which Kerry describes as very loud and in your face!

Neil is really not into in ear monitors preferring a couple of wedges in front of him as he has had for over thirty years. In fact, no one uses IEM with Kerry revealing that they had tried them but there was just too much separation.

Microphones include a fairly standard Shure set up on the drum kit with a Shure Beta 98AMP/C condenser drum mic with built in pre-amp's on the toms, Shure 57



on snare, and for the kick a Shure 52 and Shure 91. For overheads there are a couple of Earthworks microphones.

"The Earthworks mics are fantastic; the only time I have ever used overhead mics as loud as any other mic on the kit," remarked Kerry. "They're very liquid and transparent. Neil has a Shure 58A on his guitar position as well as on his piano. The piano is a grand with a MIDI pick up in it so we have an Earthworks bar inside the piano also triggering a piano module just to get that extra gain before feedback."

The Dizzy Heights tour naturally comprises a good half of the new album in question, as well as some gems from the past. After touring Australia and New Zealand, the show travelled to the US before Europe, ending in Dubai mid-May.

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The tour was professionally run with a distinct lack of egos and a family vibe. In fact, Bruno's FOH man Derek Brener happened upon doing Bruno's mixing when Bruno was fairly unknown playing small clubs and has grown with him. The first big arena show that Derek ever did was for Bruno in his home town of Hawaii. No pressure there then.

"After three days working for Bruno, he said 'D don't go anywhere, you were meant to be here' and he meant it as I have been here ever since," said Derek. "It's been a wild ride as it was such a fast climb and I had to rise to the occasion which I did, because I care. You can't buy caring. You can hire somebody who doesn't have any emotional connections and they don't really give a s*** but that's not the case with me. These are my brothers and it's a family atmosphere."

Being so close to Bruno enables Derek to be ten steps ahead of him, to be able to anticipate where he is going next and to be ready for it.

JPJ Audio, with whom Derek was very impressed, supplied a Clair Bros rig identical to that used elsewhere in the world.

"We were extremely happy to have our proprietary boxes and travel with everything we prefer however that won't be the case in Asia and New Zealand," he commented. "People get confused about Bruno's vibe; they think he is a studio pop artist but when they see him live they soon realize it is primarily a rock show. Yes, there's some R'n'B and some reggae but the Clair rig is so versatile you can basically get away with every genre with their boxes. They work on so many levels for so many different kinds of music. Primarily it's a rock'n'roll box that's loud which suits our show as it is loud and in your face."

The PA, comprising Clair i5's for the main rig and i3's for the rear speakers, is configured with 20 boxes per side. Twelve i5's boxes are used for side hang plus there are 12 flown iS2-18 subwoofers per side and eight BT2-18's, which were placed on the ground.

"We spread low end throughout the entire arena so it doesn't matter where you are sitting, you're going to get hit by low end," said Derek. "The PA really sounds good and we get a lot of great compliments." For monitors and FOH there are DiGiCo SD7's, both running redundant Waves Soundgrid servers. Derek is running a total of 108 physical inputs for the eight-piece band.

"The SD7 is a monster of a console; it is customizable and has so many options," he remarked. "It has a lot of space for a massive show like this and can provide the capability required. It has an amazing amount of features – I particularly like the snapshot recall scope, dual engines and dynamic EQs. It's simply a great console which sounds phenomenal."

Derek doesn't use much in the way of effects, just mono and stereo delays plus reverb which Bruno loves. One would think a Bruno Mars show would be filled with a bunch of effects but it's not – it's raw, real talent that speaks for itself.

"Anything that we do just enhances it," said Derek. "It's purely about what is coming off the stage. The band is loud and it's tough to keep Bruno's voice above them. If he's having a weak moment or hard week as far as his voice is concerned, I have to pull the band back a bit but I never lose the power that the whole show brings. Bruno is so magnetic, it can be a little bit less loud and it still hits you in the face. It's overwhelmingly powerful." For the past few years a Sennheiser SKM 5200 handheld transmitter with an MD 5235 capsule had been the main microphone of choice. However, on the very day I visited the show at Sydney's Allphones Arena the audio crew and Bruno conducted a shoot out of microphones.



"The result is that Bruno has decided to go with a simplistic, classic and trusty Shure SM58," revealed Derek.

On stage there are no monitor boxes as the entire band uses in-ear monitors in the form of customised JH Audio in-ears, Sennheiser 2050 IEMs and Sennheiser 3732 wireless systems.

Creative director for the tour is Roy Bennett with Cory FitzGerald as the tour's LD and programmer. With such an elaborate show design it was no surprise to hear that all of the set and lighting was shipped over to Australia from VER of Glendale. The overhead rig has around 200 fixtures with another 50 on the floor and 276 Chromlech Elidy PX100 tiles wrapping the stage and risers.

"The overall design is based on a nightclub look with the diamond shape of the main lighting rig forming a ceiling complete with ceiling tiles," explained Jim Petrusson, lighting crew chief. "The majority of fixtures are Clay Paky Sharpys, both washes and profiles, as they have low profiles and high output which were necessary so they could be recessed into the ceiling. Also overhead are Martin MAC Vipers and Vari-lite VL3500 Washes."

The retro-style set has its disco ambience strengthened by a giant mirrorball that hovers over the stage and some funky stage pieces such as the chevron 'louvers' that create a semi-transparent background. GLP impression X4's compact size has enabled them to be built into the mirror ball as well as being used inside the band risers.

"It's quite a versatile rig and although the initial brief was for a club vibe sometimes its rock, sometimes it pop and sometimes R'n'B," added Jim. Also in the rig are Robe 600 LEDWashes, Martin MAC Auras, Martin Atomic 3000 strobes, Solaris LED Flares, Martin StageBars, a Supernova Novalight, MDG One hazers and Jem ZR44 foggers. Control was by a grandMA2 operated by John LaBriola.

FROM LEFT - JIM PETRUSSON-LIGHTING CREW CHIEF,
DEREK BRENER-FOH, JOHN LABRIOLA-LIGHTING OPERATOR



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Kate Miller-Heidke

The press for Kate Miller-Heidke's upcoming shows at the Sydney Opera House as part of Vivid LIVE lyrically describes her thus 'Yielding vocal heroics described by the New Yorker as 'a big clutch of Pantone swatches' and 'being f***ed by butterflies' by Neil Gaiman.....'

Just had to share that with you.

Kate has just finished a short tour of the country in support of her fourth solo album O Vertigo!, a vibrant and critically acclaimed piece of work. Lighting designer for the tour was Kait Hall who had previously worked indirectly with Kate when she supported Missy Higgins.





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After discussions with Kate, Kait looked for a way to add theatrical elements to the show that would tie in with the album's artwork, recent video shoots and other media. The result was a mythical forest look with a series of white vintage dresses, from the 1940's through to the 1980's, hung on coat hangers midair. Strands of ivy are hung in front of the rear stage blacks with the dark stage accentuating the dresses.

The dresses were internally lit by LED bud light and externally lit by LEDs and wide angled spot fixtures that were hired locally. Essentially each dress was a mini projection screen.

Kait spent many hours scouring charity shops for the dresses as she wanted a variety of textures.

"Design wise, the dresses had to look good on a hanger but it was nice to get a variety of fabrics as each one appears differently under certain colours," explained Kait. "The dresses hang in the air on black cord which obviously has wires attached to it because of the internal lights. The LED bud lights were something I found in IKEA many years ago – they've been sitting in storage waiting for the right use for them! I tried some other single point light sources but the bud light illuminated the entirety of the dress the best and didn't generate any heat".

The dresses were patterned by gobos from either Martin MAC Vipers or Vari-lite



VL3000's, depending on what the hire company had available, and the colour wash was supplied by RGB LED PARs or occasionally, MAC 101's. The remainder of the light for the performers onstage was provided by MAC700's from the front and the rear, with either MAC250 Entours or MAC350's to light the performers from below and the sides.

"There were a few specials where I did triangulations for solos," added Kait. "Because there are some moments in Kate's songs that can get quite eerie and emotional, I deliberately picked some positions for the MAC250's that would result in some haunting shadows. Just the odd two or three seconds in certain songs where Kate's lyrics get very dramatic."

With only three performers onstage, there wasn't a need for masses of light on them with each player lit individually. There were no big washes of light on stage and to keep the theatrical atmosphere, there is no visible movement of lighting fixtures.

Lighting was picked up in each city with only the dresses and the ivy travelling with the tour in two suitcases. Everything had to be fairly portable - this was integral to the design as there was only Kait and one other crew person on the road. For control, Kait chose to use a grandMA1 rather than the newer grandMA2.

"Most of the hire companies had grandMA1's," Kait explained. "If I had used the grandMA2 I would have liked to have a wing with it and most companies didn't have one available. I decided I'd rather take a grandMA1 with extra faders and executor buttons".

Addendum

In the article (April, CX) featuring the Breath of Life Festival it was written in a couple of places that the PA in use for the festival was a "d&b Technologies PA system". The actual brand used for this festival was d&b audiotechnik, the well-known and very well accepted German brand.

CX apologize for the error.






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STUFF FOR THE BRAINY TYPES

IF I COULD TURN BACK TIME...

BY JIMMY DEN-ouden



DON'T YOU JUST WISH YOU COULD DEFY THE LAWS OF TEMPORAL PHYSICS SOME DAYS? I DO. I WANT NEGATIVE DELAY ON MY CONSOLE CHANNELS. I'M NOT QUITE SURE WHY, BUT I THINK IT WOULD BE COOL. I KNOW I'VE THOUGHT OF ONE GENUINE APPLICATION FOR SUCH A THING IN THE PAST. MADNESS YOU SAY? PERHAPS...

Okay, so time to fess up. I haven't come up with some form of "new physics". I haven't built a time machine. I don't even own a model of the TARDIS (though I can cram a remarkable amount of crap into our store room here at the CX Bunker). I simply can't turn back time and apply "negative delay" to a signal. But, I can achieve the same apparent effect by applying positive delay to everything else around it. Timing is, after all, relative.

How hard would it be to implement this on a console? Not very. Dial some negative delay into one channel, and it automatically delays every other channel in the console by the same amount. It creates apparent negative delay. Say you negatively delay channel 1 by 5mS. The console then transparently applies 5mS of actual delay to all the other channels. Thus, channel 1 arrives 5mS earlier than all the others, maintaining the time relationship. Pretty simple huh?

All channels in same time plane

	-5mS	-4mS	-3mS	-2mS	-1mS	0mS	1mS	2mS	3mS	4mS	5mS
Channel 1											
Channel 2											
Channel 3											

Apply negative delay to channel 1 - but this timing can't actually exist!

	-5mS	-4mS	-3mS	-2mS	-1mS	0mS	1mS	2mS	3mS	4mS	5mS
Channel 1											
Channel 2											
Channel 3											

So instead, delay all other channels to achieve same time relationship!

	0mS	1mS	2mS	3mS	4mS	5mS	6mS	7mS	8mS	9mS	10mS
Channel 1											
Channel 2											
Channel 3											

NOW THE PROBLEMS

Use too much negative delay in a live situation, and everyone will know about it. 10mS might not sound like much, but even 3mS is detectable by good musicians. I reckon it would be better as a broadcast mix tool, since live applications would see the natural sounds off stage conflicting with the non-negatively-delayed signals.

Negative delay would use a lot of DSP, but since most consoles already allow for channel delays, it should be possible on at least a few of the current ones. Capping the maximum negative delay at something sensible like 50mS would probably be a wise move. There should also be a "negative delay disable/reset" button in the system menu or something.

Lastly, and perhaps most critically, I can't for the life of me remember exactly when or why I decided negative delay should even be a thing. But I know I did.

Are you a brainy type? Can you think of an application? Is this the best creative mixing tool idea ever? The worst? Let me know what you think – jimmy@juliusmedia.com.

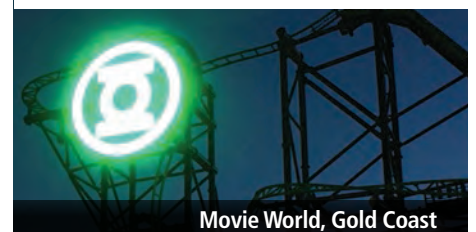
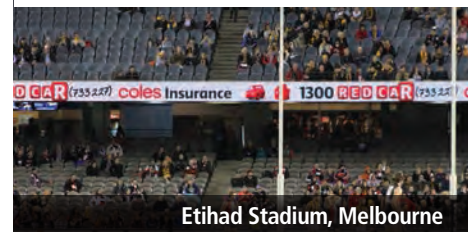
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BIZ TALK

FRANCHISES SUCK HERE'S WHY...



with Julius Grafton

A RECENT ARTICLE IN THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD ABOUT FRANCHISING, QUOTES 'STEP INTO LIFE' FOUNDER LARRY COHEN ON HIS OUTDOOR FITNESS FRANCHISE EMPIRE. 'THE FRANCHISE INVESTMENT IS \$39,995. OUR BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY IS WE DON'T MAKE OUR INCOME OFF THE FRANCHISEE. OUR INCOMES STEMS FROM THE ROYALTY STRUCTURE'.

So think about this. They've sold 165 packages at just shy of 40 grand each, which works out to about six and a half million dollars – but then they take a cut of the action. That's how all franchise agreements work, and that's why CX hates them all.

"There's an ongoing monthly set royalty which they pay each month, of a percentage of turnover. Depending on the turnover level of the franchise, one or the other kicks in."

The power always sits with the franchisor – the person who owns the brand. In the case of Step Into Life, which is possibly exemplary and simply used as an example in this story, they would almost certainly centralise all the bookings so their system allocates work and knows how much royalty to charge the franchisee – the guy or girl doing the grunt work.

If it's a shop, the franchisor holds the master lease, so they can lock you out if you breach the contract. They can require you buy all your stock from them, and charge you more than you would pay on the open market. And they all charge you a few percent a month for marketing.

CX knows more people who've gone bankrupt because of ruthless franchise deals than via any other method. We know plenty of sad people who've gone bankrupt due to sexually transmitted debt – indeed a recent date revealed the lovely was indeed bankrupt because her property developer ex ran away and left her holding the bank guarantees when his empire toppled. We know even more people who've not gone bankrupt, but who've been hounded into hiding by gambling or drug debts. But it's the franchise systems

that cruels and ruins people the worst, because you're over-working yourself to death for someone else.

Take the case of my former local DVD store at Turrumurra, where they terminated their franchise at the end of the contract but made the mistake of continuing to operate their business, with their stock, from the same address under a new name.

Bzzzt. Not allowed, said Blockbuster. The corporation then took them to court, hosed them for money, and closed them down. Not because there was a new Blockbuster anywhere near. Indeed no one buys those franchises any more, as DVD rental is in sharp decline. No, they simply exercised their rights under the standard franchise contract and beggared the people who had worked years and paid all their 'profits' in 'royalties'. (See BB AUSTRALIA v BYTAN PTY LTD, Supreme Court Vic).

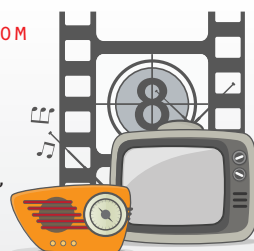
So before you head off to sign up a franchise with any big or small brand, Google 'bad franchise' and get savvy. Some of the biggest brands in Australia treat their franchise holders like slaves and idiots.

Franchises are not about working for yourself. They're about working for The Man.

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At a time when the Abbot government begins its process of repealing thousands of pieces of legislation in an attempt to reduce the cost of running the country, increasing productivity and encouraging development (their words not ours) you wonder whether our industry might not benefit from being a little more regulated than it is.

You just need to consider pages 11 and 12 of last month's CX magazine (April 2014) where the folk at CX reported on likely changes to the wireless audio rules, knock off gear and a depiction of what might be a potentially unsafe line array installation.

Having dealt with the wireless audio issue now for several years we are convinced that not having a more robust and visible licencing scheme for those products made us especially vulnerable to the 'terra nullius' approach taken by the Rudd/Gillard/Rudd government. While convenient and free the Low

Too much red tape or not enough?

Inference Potential Device Licence (LIPD) regime made our industry vulnerable. We cannot begin to tell you how many times we had the LIPD quoted back to us by a minister or government official along with the words 'and as a result your users have no rights'.

Yet our industry enables more than \$32 billion worth of economic activity each year through the sales and deployment of these devices. Any critical analysis raises the question of why we did not act to protect ourselves from the potential of shifts in spectrum allocation and increase our visibility through alternate, better or more robust licencing arrangements at some point over the last decade or so. After all being forced to relocate from one piece of spectrum to another had happened at least once prior to the current 'digital dividend' transition and, given that terrestrial TV is not assured a future in the longer term; changes could again be on the cards in the future.

The licencing trade off and what in effect would mean a little more red tape might cost a little more but it would have helped give us the visibility and status to challenge what was and will always be bad policy making and poor implementation by our previous government.

Let's take another example where thankfully we need to refer to overseas events. Readers will remember the Indiana and Belgium stage collapses of a couple of years ago and the more recent collapse of a stage in a Californian high school. Any such event here would bring serious consequences to the industry and the potential ramifications from worksafe reviews and new compliance measures to increased or more difficult-to-secure insurances. Such an event would have serious consequences and impacts for all the industry not just the unfortunate people involved.

To some extent those same risks exist with the knock off goods. Are they compliant with Australian standards? What happens if they were involved in an event that caused major damage to property, life or limb? Again it just wouldn't be the company using the non-compliant gear but scrutiny would be applied to the whole industry and to all operators.

Ignoring the individual or the organisation that might be involved in any such events and the consequences for them for the moment, how prepared is the industry overall? Can the genuine industry professionals protect themselves from the cowboys that operate around the periphery of the industry? The answer? It is doubtful that if serious scrutiny was applied to the industry for one reason or another all the industry would not be caught up in the consequences.

BY FRANK HINTON

Let's be honest here, the barriers to entering our industry are not exactly high. A hired light truck, a bit of gear, an access all areas T-shirt and some gaffa gets you into the game. Of course the risks day to day in our industry are not as high as say working as a surgeon or flying a plane but it is not entirely risk free either.

Given that sound, lighting and staging gear are so widely used these days and that it is often in close contact with the general public maybe there is room for a little additional industry red tape by way of a standards or accreditation process.

Think of it on one hand as a whole-of-industry insurance policy and on the other hand an assurance policy, a promise or pledge or guarantee for the purchases of our products and services.

Currently it is difficult to identify the good operators from the bad, the genuine pros from the rogues. That's not a good place to be, not for the professional providers and certainly not for the customers. And in truth not even for the rogues.

Of course adding a little industry red tape comes at a cost. So would, returning to the point about radio microphones, a more robust licencing regime for those devices over the past decade compared to the free of charge but ultimately useless LIPD licence. That choice, if there was a choice, is now about to cost users in excess of \$200 million as they junk their current non-compliant gear and replace it with new compliant products.

Precisely how much an industry accreditation or compliance program would cost up front is open to debate. But we think it is a debate that's worth having as the industry is doing nothing to protect itself now and you never know what is around the corner.

Industry insurance and customer assurance. It has to be worth the conversation and it may be worth a little, well applied industry red tape.

To the industry we invite your response, if you could contact ian.harvey@aceta.org.au with your comment.



Frank Hinton
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Frankfurt 2014

Puns about German sausage have got to be the wurst

The Frankfurt Pro Light & Sound exhibition was early this year - in March - at least a month earlier than it normally is. This means for Australians like us worker drones from Sector 7 at ARX*, there's only the month of February to not only get normal production up and running after the January holidays, but put together working prototypes of new stuff as well. It's a tough gig but someone has to do it, and so in early March we rolled up at the airport with bulging bags and waited for our flight to be called.

**Thanks Mr Burns. "Smithers, who is that man?" "Homer Simpson, sir, one of the worker drones from Sector 7"*



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For the long hop to Dubai we were travelling on a Qantas Airbus A380, then onto an Emirates Boeing 777 for the seven hour trip into Frankfurt. The 380 was a dream to fly on; quiet, spacious and comfortable. The 777 was like a sardine can by comparison. I've been more comfortable three-up in the backseat of an original Mini! My travelling partner in crime - Colin from ARX - has a preference for an aisle seat, but I prefer the seat that's one in from the aisle, since I'm quite wide, and if I sit on the aisle I get bumped into by every trolley and lurching passenger wandering up or down trying to make their way to the bathroom in the dark.

These seats were the tiniest I've ever tried to sit in on a plane, very uncomfortable, and set out in a 3 - 4 - 3 configuration just like a jumbo. Of course, the 777's not as wide as a jumbo so you're in dead trouble there for a kick-off, guv. (Sorry - channelling Terry from New Tricks there!)

Sitting in the window seat next to me was a German guy, of a very similar Body Mass Index to mine, so all in all it was ultra-squeezy. He had his shoulder in my chest, I had my shoulder in Col's, and Col had his shoulder halfway into the aisle, where it was duly thumped by every passing trolley.

At least it gave him an opportunity to stop them and get another bottle of red wine, thus pursuing his long-term research project into exactly how much red a modern passenger jet actually carries!

When our meals arrived we all ended up jabbing our elbows in each other's faces while trying to cut up food or unwrap the cheese/ crackers/ biscuits/ plastic cutlery/ whatever. A pleasant mealtime it was not!

I normally sleep like a drugged sloth on a plane, but not this one. When the flight finally ended I had a raging backache from trying to get comfortable in the tiny seat, with my legs ending up stuck in the seat pocket in front of me.

Tired and weary, we grabbed a taxi at the airport and whizzed off to our hotel. Whiz might seem an unlikely word to describe taxi travel, but not this one. In no time we were barrelling down the road at 160+ kph like a European Smokey and the Bandit, our driver happily abusing all the other drivers if they were foolish enough to be in front of him.

Still we made it to the hotel unscathed, and after a quick shower and a change of clothes we headed into the city shopping area known as Zeil for our traditional Frankfurt afternoon of pork sausage and beer. I was luckily able to use my favourite German phrase - "Zwei

OX DUNCAN FRY... CONTINUED



bier, bitte – mein freund wird bezahlen" Two beers please – my friend will pay!

The next day was setup day. Armed with some basic tools, we went along to Hall 8 and started the slow process of putting everything together on the stand. The cartons were all taped up tight, and neither of us had anything sharp with which to cut the tape. Across the aisle an English show crew were putting together the Focusrite stand, so I wandered over to them.

"Excuse me," I asked, "Do you have a pair of scissors I could borrow for a minute?"

They looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders.

"I've got a knife," one of them volunteered, holding out an orange box-cutter. Woohoo, I thought, this chance isn't going to come again.

I took the knife, held it up, put on my best Crocodile Dundee accent, and said, "Call that a knife? That's not a knife!"

There was a stunned silence, and then they all burst out laughing, yelling out "Call that a knife?" to each other in the worst fake Aussie accents possible. Hoges has got a lot to answer for!

The morning of the first day of the show, we went down to the hotel dining room for a good breakfast. I had some muesli to start with, then some scrambled eggs, a couple of mini pork sausages, and a couple of rashers of bacon. Yes, it's bacon Jim, but not as we know it – because it's boiled! I like bacon that has been grilled or fried, a bit crispy around the edge, but boiled just doesn't seem right. I was forced to have a couple of croissants and Nutella just to get the taste out of my mouth.

We had appointments lined up with all of our European distributors that were attending the show, a system that works pretty well. Most of them are great – enthusiastic, well-organised, keen on the product, and happy. Others come onto the stand, sit down, have a drink of something strong, and then start bleating about their problems: business is bad; my partner robbed me; my wife ran off with my best friend, and I miss him so much, etc, etc. The most common complaint is the exchange

rate, and of course the most common reply is "If we were able to control the exchange rate, do you think we'd be doing this for a living?"

As our first distributor appeared, with the waves of punters pouring into our hall reminiscent of Pamplona, a nameless voice in my ear said, "Here it comes; the running of the bulls**t!"

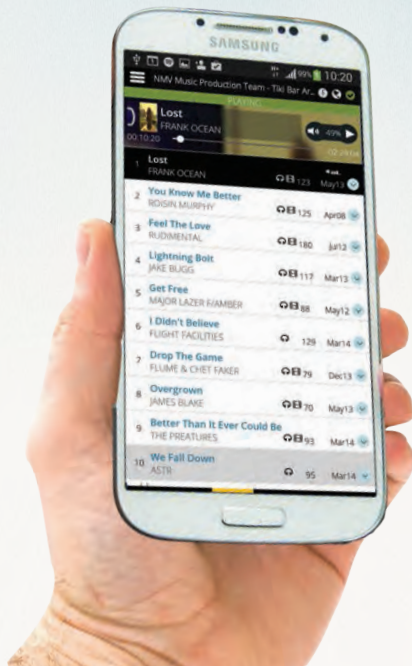
Early on the last day I took a quick trip down to the bowels of hell; A.K.A. Hall 4, the guitar and amplifier hall. It was sooooo loud in there I don't know how anyone could possibly work in such an environment for more than a few minutes. Talking to people on one stand was impossible, as any attempt at conversation was constantly being interrupted by the stand opposite demonstrating how well their quad boxes worked with various amplifiers, all at a level that would melt the ears of a deaf person swimming underwater. There seemed to be noticeably fewer stands in this hall than in years gone by – perhaps the incessant noise has been taking its toll on everyone.

At the end of the last day, once we had packed up our stand, we went downtown with Steve from Amphenol connectors, to our favourite all-you-can-eat Chinese and Japanese restaurant. Our 'Frequent Eater' loyalty card enabled us to have a Chinese steamboat meal (a sort of Asian fondue) at a bargain price. However, I think the laundry cost for the wrecked tablecloth in front of me might have literally soaked up any profit they made on the meal. At one point I picked up the wrong ladle to fill up my bowl, and managed to tip its complete contents over the table!

"Jeez, we're making a mess, aren't we?" I laughed. "What do you mean 'we?'" said Col! The tablecloth in front of them was still pristine and white, while in front of me it looked like the loser in a soup-wrestling contest!

At the airport for the trip home, I was very relieved to see that we had an A380 for the whole trip home. Even better, it was only half full, enabling me to sprawl out across a few seats and comfortably spend the whole flight eating, sleeping, snoring, and watching movies. And pretty much had my own personal toilet, too.

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