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(and where to have it fixed)

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under a hot sun

LIFE IN LIGHTS

And how a **Super Trouper** works

TRAINING

What's wrong with the system?

ISSN 1320-5595



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GEAR

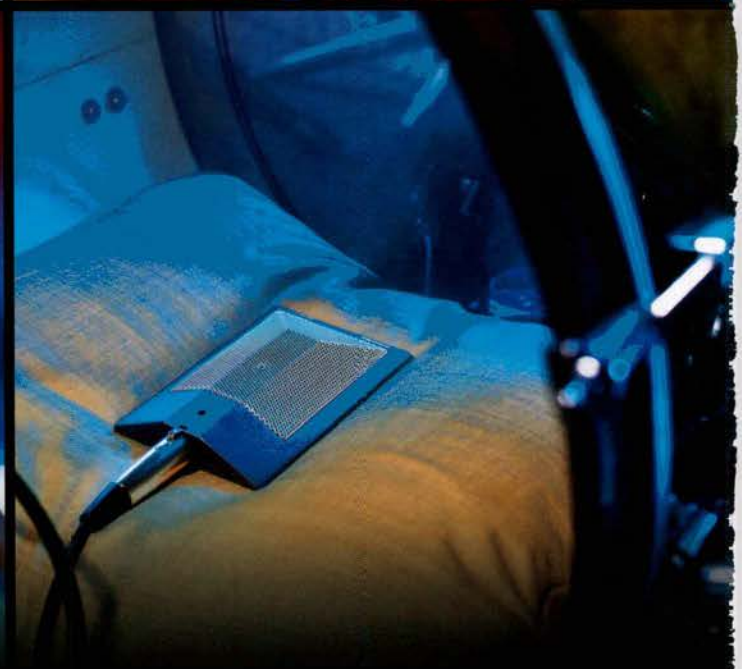
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DESIGN**

Picture: Hayley Forward, monitor engineer, Coda Audio



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Clockwise from upper left : New Shure microphone models Beta 181, Beta 98AD/C, Beta 91A, Beta 98AMP

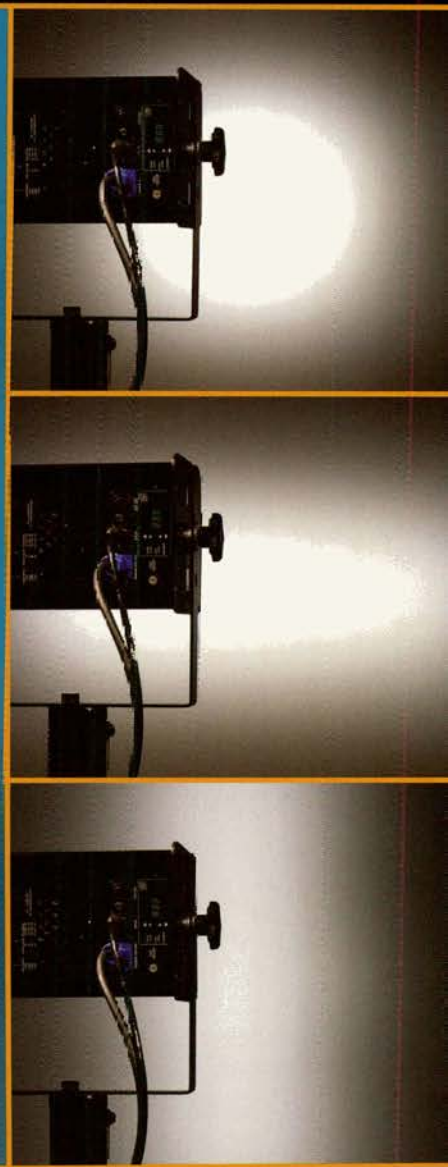
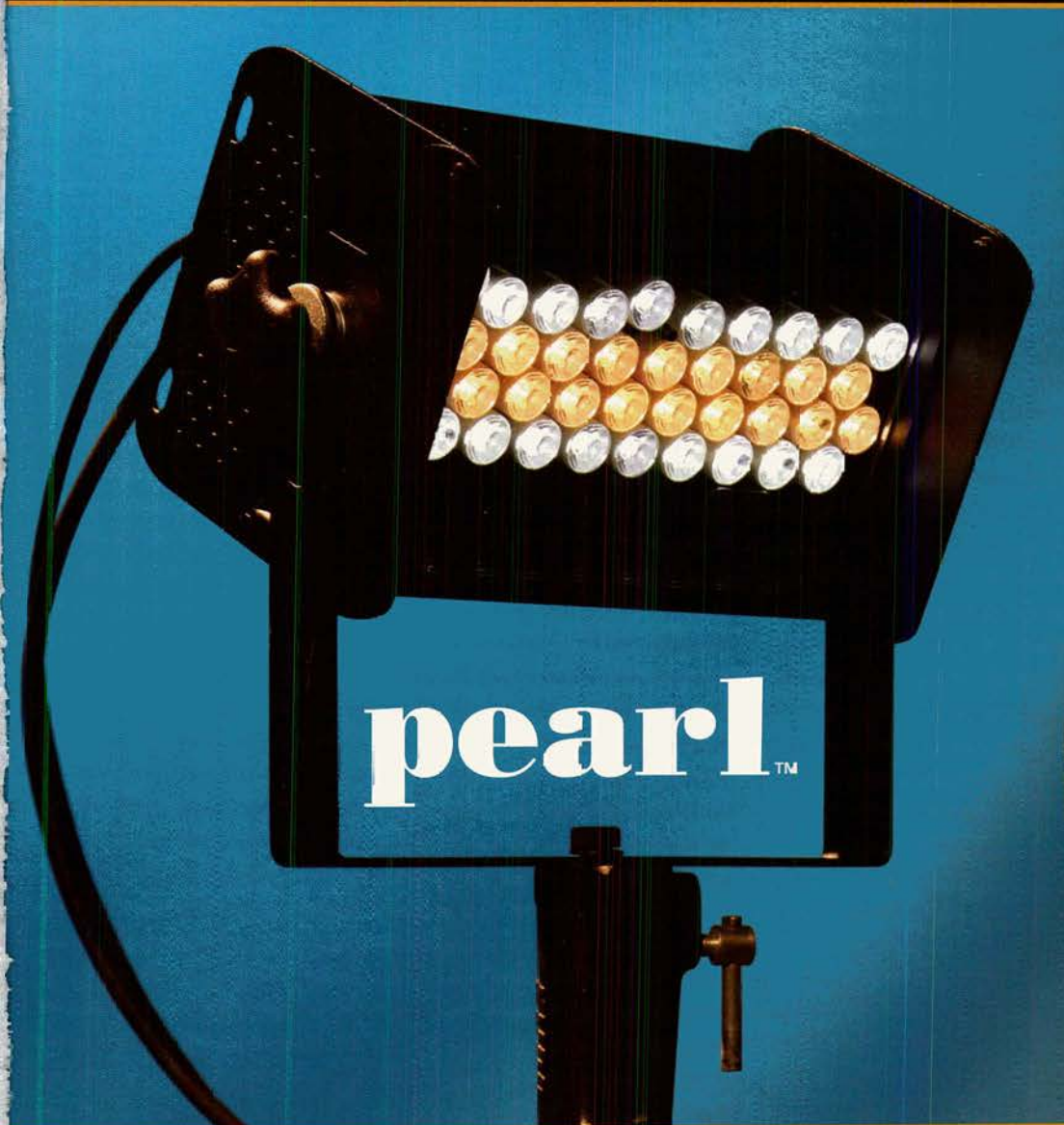
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evolving light™

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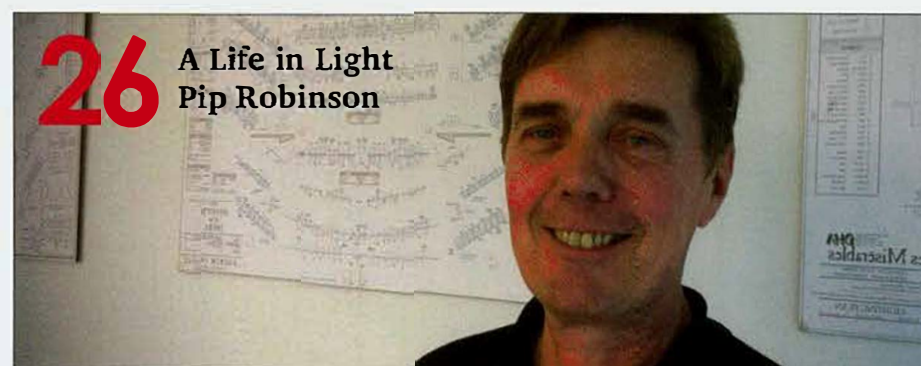
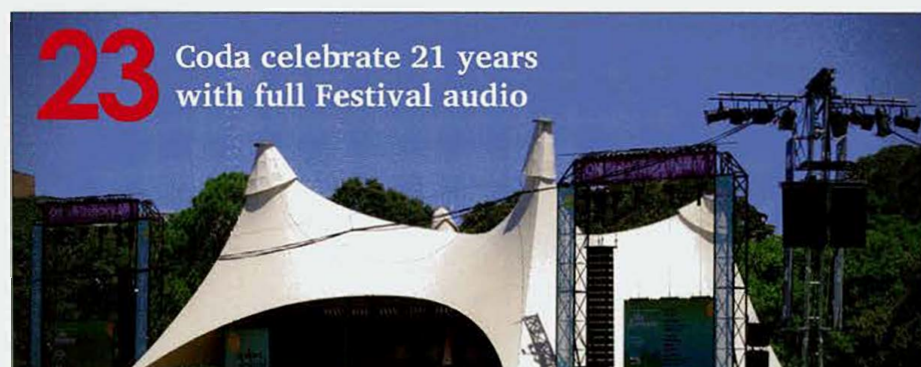
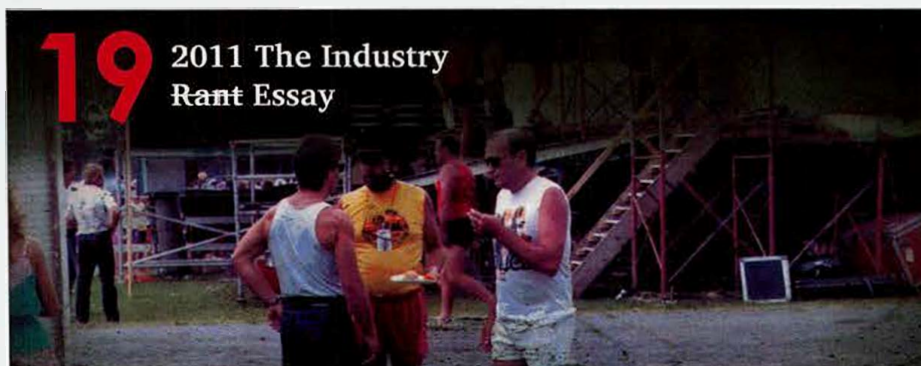
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ALL NEW CX!

In our 21st year we are now back to what we do best, following the closure of the distracting college we ran until the end of 2010. Since 2001 we've done the best we can to bring you the news, but now we have much more focus.

CX-TV launched really well in December - we had about 4,500 views that month, and got a lot of valuable feedback. That has contributed to the latest edition, which we put together alongside this magazine. See it at juliusmedia.com

We lost some really good friends recently - our colleagues Andy MacKenzie and associate Monique Wilson, design associates Bite Communications, along with accounts manager Helen Hunter. They all went the way of Julius College, which made for a downbeat end to 2010.

Then we moved across Sydney to Chatswood, where we now share offices and a TV studio with Les Bishop at Digital Space Media. The latest CX-TV was shot here. It was an almost seamless move, accompanied by a massive clearout of the campus through December.

Inside

The Industry Essay is all yours. One of the strengths of our platform is our strong active email list which produced the brilliant ideas and observations from readers in response to our question, 'What Is Wrong With Our Industry?' (and what can be done

to make it right?)

Allied with this is an article on Technical Training and the issues that lie ahead. Possibly this is a bit highbrow for some, but as we put it, if we don't get on top of the agenda then an insidious QANGO (quasi-autonomous government organisation) called IBSA will do us all a big disservice.

Layout and design is now on a new pathway and we would love to gather your impressions. As we send this issue to print, we are shooting the tail end of a complementary edition of CX-TV. Through 2011 we plan to fine tune the relationship between our ipTV channel and this print mag.

Monthly From June

With the June issue the print magazine will be monthly again, after we cut frequency to deal with the college distraction. Another initiative is our E-Zine version which may now be purchased alone as a subscription, or bundled with the print issue. We will keep the PDF sections free online as well, so no one misses out.

We now have five channels of media, if you like to categorise. CX is the print magazine preferred across the industry, and it will be monthly from June. It comes in E-Zine version which is emailed to subscribers BEFORE the print mag arrives. The E-Zine has active web links, and reads very nicely on all platforms including iPad.

Then we put the PDF version online for free. It is in sections for download after you register and provide your email address.

The email address you give us enables us to send you CX-N email news as it happens. We don't do daily or

weekly, rather we keep it until there is a reason why. With Print, CX-TV, E-Zine, Download and CX-N email news we have you covered all over!

Finally

Last but not least, I'm here because I love doing this. I like how you are relaxed enough to give me hard feedback. I asked what you think about rating or ranking production firms, and the most concise (and representative) opinion came from Doug Watkins:

'Why would you want to do that? We are an industry of proud and sometimes exaggerated egos, why would you want to be little anyone in this industry?'

'Why would you want to give gold stars to companies that pay their employees on time? Is that really any of your business? I wouldn't want to 'rat' on any of the companies I have worked for, we are all friends in this industry, why would anyone want to do something that would permanently make enemies, we may need to work for them again at some time in the future, we are a very small industry'.

'It sort of sounds like CX are looking to make themselves, prosecutor, judge & jury over our entire industry, and I don't believe that to be a good idea. Just remember the flack that Gerry Harvey copped when he went out on the limb the other week, trying to push his own personal point on the consumers, it back-fired. I'd hate to see that sort of reaction happen to CX'.

Sincere thanks to everyone who contributes!

Julius



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the audio-technica lounge



The Audio-Technica Lounge is the first specialist headphone retail store in Australia. It's an audio Mecca with well in excess of 100 headphones and in-ears covering the full spectrum of studio, Hi-Fi, DJ and noise cancelling as well as the fashion on-the-move styles that have propelled Audio-Technica to number one in the white-hot Japanese market.

Headphones and in-ears are audio injectors and there's no cleaner, purer, more dynamic way of injecting your music than with Audio-Technica.

They're also part of you - you wear them like you wear your fashion - and no other 'phones look or feel like Audio-Technica. With 15 listening stations and an extraordinarily long listening lounge you can relax, audition and experience the difference. The Audio-Technica Lounge is all about the fusion of your music with your style and it's part of Sydney's new premier fashion experience - Westfield Sydney.

We welcome you to The Audio-Technica Lounge.


audio-technica
always listening

CX News

DEVICES, PEOPLE & CONCEPTS

Date: 15 Jan 2011 - 01 March 2011 | Issue: Vol 3, CX57



GREAT ESCAPE

Someone was busy and you may be the patsy....

It can happen here: live sound firms in the USA were done over late last year by a 'Sony Tour Technical Director' known as Greg Bruce who scammed an A-list of gear worth millions. Don't buy a used Midas PRO 6 console anytime soon, without checking if it is owned by Digital Console Rental co of Nashville. He got two of them.

Fancy a slightly used Meyer Sound Milo Line Array system? 16 MILO 90, 2 MILO 120 and 8 Meyer 700hp Self Powered Subs went from Rock-N-Road audio along with hanging frames and a bucket load of Meyer stage monitors.

The guy was on a roll. He went to Denver and scored from Dowlen Sound more Meyer - this time 10 Meyer Sound

700HPs, a DiGiCo SD8 console AND a Digidesign Venue system for good measure with a Side Car, FOH Rack, a 48x24 Stage Rack. He completed his list with 10 Shure UHFR Handheld Wireless with SM58 and Beta58 capsules.

It's a made to measure hit job that conned three firms

Remember to cross check ID of anyone who wants a dry hire, and even anyone who isn't known, even if they claim 'A list' credentials.

Picture: Karrie Keyes pictured with a Pro 6 she uses for Monitors with Pearl Jam. Karrie has nothing to do with the scam, we just wanted to show you a Pro 6.



GREENER GRASS

Francisco Partners
Completes Acquisition
of Grass Valley

For all you video guys out there, this is a big news story, As from January the sale of Grass Valley to Francisco Partners is now complete. Grass Valley Group (GVG) will start doing business as an independent company.

Grass Valley Group was for a time part of French technology company Thomson group. Now Thomson has quit the brand, the entrepreneurial spirit and 'can do' attitude that has distinguished the company since 1974 should be reinforced and be more visible throughout the new Grass Valley.

Under the trade name "Grass Valley", the sale includes all the current Grass Valley Broadcast & Professional business. This includes the camera, content repurposing, editing, master control, modular, news production, production automation, production switchers, routing, and video servers.

By Les Bishop

Pre Amplifiers

Amplifiers

Mixer Amplifiers

Constant
Voltage Devices

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Surface Mount
Speakers

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Speakers

Music Horns

Paging Horns

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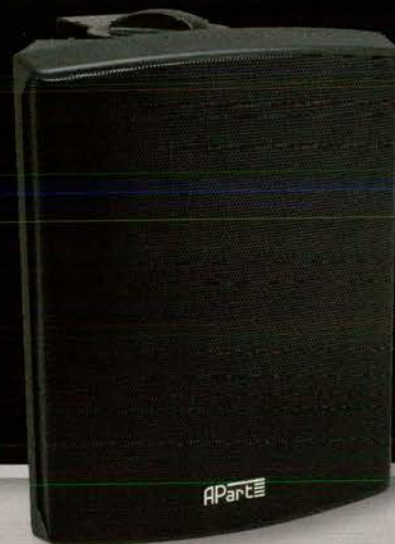
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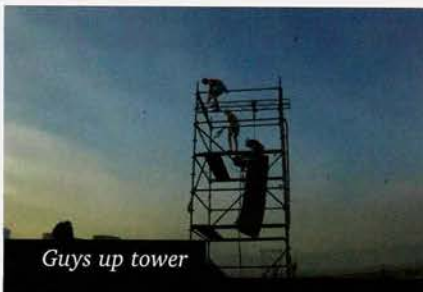
To get your hands on this innovative new gear, call:

Garry Foster - Syntec International Australia: 02 9910 6700 ■ Dan Rowe - Syntec International New Zealand: 9263 9885

ANNOUNCEMENT: Rising Star of European Audio Industry is Now Available in Australia & NZ

Warped and Curved Vision

Launching the Festival of Sydney (Festival story inside) Technical Direction Company immersed the stage in projection. The imagery was warped using Barco FLM HD20 projectors onto a seamless 15m x 4m curved infinity cyclorama with stunning effect.



Guys up tower

SECURITY IN SPOTLIGHT

Tension and tests in summer heat

Last issue we reported the dilemma faced by security at Burswood when Metallica fans climbed the ground support and remained there while the band played. Now we have video of punters up a delay tower at Stereosonics in Melbourne.

The video shows two guys, with a blizzard of plastic bottles being thrown. Then at the two-minute mark, a third guy climbs. All climb down, and at four minutes a girl is up the tower. There is no security seen on the footage.

"Stop both shows and sort it out", says leading promoter Michael Chugg. His famous stage rants included the

Continued on Page 12 ----->

COMM GAMES DEBACLE

Organisers Exit Stage Left

When the combined technical forces overcame the challenges staging the events associated with the Commonwealth Games in Delhi, the organizers threw in the towel and disappeared as the crowd went home. Quite literally no one remained in authority, and small details like debriefing and payment did not happen. Most seriously the equipment languished in containers, and was not released.

This caused enormous concern for Norwest Productions (audio) and Howard and Sons Pyrotechnics in Sydney, whose equipment was effectively impounded.

Creative consultant to the games ceremonies, Ric Birch, went ballistic and the world press picked up the story. "This is a scandalous situation. I find it outrageous an organising committee behaves like that," he said. "The behaviour of organisers and Indian government agencies has been so shameful that any international company must beware of entering into any business contracts with Indian government agencies.

Media got short shrift. Reuters got through to Organising Committee

secretary general Lalit Bhanot who then refused to comment. "I'm busy in a meeting right now," he said.

VK Verma, director general of the organising committee, said: "I would not be able to comment as I was not handling that at all. You have to speak to the in-charge of ceremonies."

Howard and Sons were advised in January that 14 pallets were in the air, and their shipping container was 'being inspected'. They have not been paid the final A\$300k owed.

Norwest Productions were luckier, with their shipping containers leaving after a delay of almost two months. "Thanks to the professional tenacity of Andrew Rodd (Project Manager)", says Norwest head Chris Kennedy. "We didn't know they were being shipped, but now we know they are on the water".

Birch is said to be owed 'a lot of money'. The debacle seems to follow accusations of graft and corruption levied against some organisers, leading to fear of involvement by any other agency. Many posts in the CX Forum decry the lack of responsibility exhibited by the Government of India.

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-----> Continued from Page 10

infamous Eastern Creek Guns and Roses debacle where the crowd, bored waiting for Axl Rose lit a bonfire of beer cartons. "Put that f---in' fire OUT now! The band won't come on until it goes OUT!" yelled Chugg. Thirty guys stomp out the flames.

Commenting on the Metallica and Stereosonic security issue of punters climbing, Chugg said "some acts would sort it out themselves, sounds like very untogether security".

Promoters, band, venue and production management are all

exposed if a punter falls, and new industrial manslaughter legislation could see charges laid in event of a fatality.

Elsewhere the security industry was making media waves for concert promoters with issues in Sydney that included guards surrounding a guy with his toddler on his shoulders.

The Security Industry Association says each event has different organizer guidelines. In one case punters complained to the media that picnics had been confiscated at a winery show, and blankets to sit on were not allowed at a Jack Johnston outdoor concert.



NEWCASTLE SSL INSTALLATION

NBN acqs C10 console

NBN Television was inaugurated on 4 March 1962 as the first regional commercial television station in New South Wales.

The recent addition of an SSL console was supplied with dual redundant power supplies and processors which was critical for NBN's one hour News broadcast application.

"We were looking at all the options, and had virtually made a decision to purchase an alternative brand, when I saw the C10 HD at SMPTE last July. The C10, a new model just released by SSL at the time, provided the configuration, layout and features we were looking for, and very importantly, at the right price" commented Leo Perren from NBN.

www.solid-state-logic.com

THE ART OF MIC SUSPENSION

Rycote to host product evenings

Stefano Pucello from Rycote would like to brief audio professionals on a new range of microphone suspensions, which are virtually unbreakable and don't perish or go brittle over time.

The evenings will start with light refreshments from 5-30pm for a 6-00pm start.

Venues and dates are:

- **Sydney**, Monday February 14 (apologies to all romantics) at Australian Film, TV & Radio School, Moore Park.
- **Melbourne**, Tuesday February 15, at JMC academy, 169 Bank Street, South Melbourne.
- **Auckland**, Thursday February 17 at Duxton Hotel, 100 Grey Street, Auckland

RSVP please to jameswaldron@syntec.com.au

ULA LAUNCH LEDWASH

Industry tour shows off QuadChip LED Light

Around the end of the year ULA hosted lighting industry professionals to a launch for the new Robe ROBIN LEDWash 600. This fixture features 37 x 10 Watt RGBW Cree multichip LEDs that are each individually controllable. These are arranged in 3 concentric rings designed for colour and pattern effects when pointed towards an audience - as well as for providing comprehensive, even wash coverage of performers, stages, spaces and scenery.

The 4-in-1 multichip also enables a true white to be produced as well as a whole spectrum of different colour temperature whites. 15-60 degree motorised zoom is a versatile feature that will enhance the scope for all types of applications.

Robe's Managing Director Josef Valchar and ULA's MD Cuono Biviano presented the Australian Robe Roadshow. Josef says, "The 3 LED rings are completely unique and sets the LEDWash 600 aside from other LED wash light products, also making it a truly 'multi-purpose' unit. The fixture has perfect colour mixing, no shadow effects, individual control of the LED rings and has wide zoom angles".

The inner and middle rings can be dimmed leaving only the outer ring for tunnel effects and fading and chasing simultaneously between all 3 rings can create some truly psychedelic and mind-blowing kaleidoscopic effects. The unit can also be strobed and pre-programmed with random pulse strobe effects.

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Here's a cool piece of plumbing! Just get your local roofing firm to whip some of these up to fit over your mover's.

WIRELESS WAITS FOR GOVT DECISION

Australia's wireless microphone users have at least two years until the Government sells off most frequencies now in use. The 'Digital Dividend' sale will net many billions as telco users introduce new services on the spectrum now used for analogue TV.

Once sold, there will be no frequencies available between 694 and 820MHz, covering channels 52 - 69. Some legacy wireless mic and In Ear Monitor systems only operate in this range, so those users will face immediate obsolescence as at the switchover date which we believe to be no sooner than Dec 31st 2013.

In the USA, two channels have been made available for entertainment wireless use, although not the same two channels nationally. Here the use of the LIPD licence means that there is likely to be a different result though the outcomes for Australian users are now hinging on how and where terrestrial TV states will be allocated across the remaining broadcast

spectrum. The Government is still to decide on this.

There almost certainly will be frequencies between 520 and 694 MHz (channels 27 - 51) available. In the USA, two channels have been made available for entertainment wireless use, although not the same two channels nationally. The uses of these various frequencies are yet to be decided by the Government.

The Australian Wireless Users Group (AWAG) have been lobbying the Government for some years, to try to ease the transition out of channels 52 - 69. Drawing on similar schemes overseas, they would like the Government to do two things within the final sales process.

Because wireless users are decentralised and in many cases not informed of the issue, an education program should be run during the two year sale process. Secondly a buy-back for affected systems could be funded from the sales proceeds.

AWAG's clear message to all stakeholders is that if the transition is well managed between now and December 2013 including the proposed education and buyback programs then all parties will benefit. The users of wireless devices large and small can be accommodated. While the telco's will be able to quickly scale up their activities in the 695 - 820MHz frequencies with a minimum of interference.

Users should check which channels (frequencies) they currently can access. Much equipment straddles the soon to be obsolescent and the lower channels, while some will only work within the 'Digital Dividend' area.

Buying new equipment? Ensure it covers as much of the 519 - 694 MHz area as possible, or is in the unaffected 915 - 930 MHz area. Consumers would be well advised to buy as agile a device as they can afford.

GAFFER HAS IDEA!

Matthews Studio Equipment announces the introduction of K-Stackers, a simple solution for fluorescent lighting support. Based on a concept from Canadian-based gaffer Alex Amyot, MSE has created a strong and robust tool that turns single fluorescents into a multiple of powerful lighting supports.

K-Stackers allow the placement of large fluorescent fixtures in a tight pattern for more punch. Or, a fast "dead down" light with fluorescent fixtures hung from a Junior Boom or telescoping hanger.

With K-Stackers a "Tower of Fluo Power" can be created by tying together two or three large fluorescent fixtures on a rolling stand or Runway Base. Mount up to six 4-foot fixtures, hang the ballasts off the back, tie everything together into a power strip and, with just a stinger to the power source, this compact, powerful light source can be moved almost anywhere.

Two K-Stackers on a stand or base allows for placement of four 4-foot fluorescent fixtures vertically around the stand, creating a "campfire" lighting source.



HDMI Over Single Coax Splitter/Extender



A HD video distribution solution for deployment in digital signage and DOOH applications.

The PCE122 can send ultra high quality HDMI v1.3 over a single coaxial cable! (RG6 or RG59). It can send full HD 1080P at up to 120M or 720P up to 230M, both with full 7.1 channel audio. The conversion is fully digital (HDMI to SDI and back again) with no additional compression and gives you crystal clear HD at long distances. The PCE122 also contains a built-in 1 to 2 Coaxial Splitter to drive two separate receivers and each receiver has a loop-through to daisy chain additional receivers as required. Cables are connected via BNC for a secure, vibration resistant connection. Featuring world leading single coaxial transmission, the PCE122 is designed to simplify installation.

PCE122 Features:

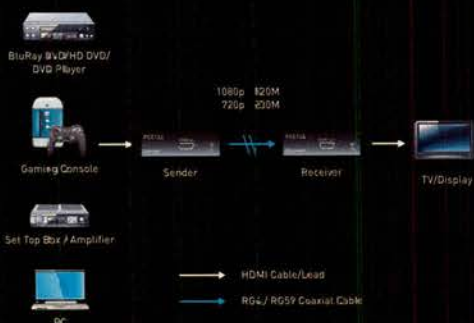
- 120M HDMI 1080p video and 7.1channel audio One Cable transmission with Ultra High Quality Video
- Features World Leading Single Coaxial Transmission, designed to simplify Installation
- 1080p 120M / 720p 230M long distance Ultra High Quality Video with 7.1 channels surround sounds transmission
- Up to 7.1 channels audio, Dolby® Digital / Dolby® TrueHD / DTS®-HD pass thru
- Built-in 1 to 2 Coaxial Splitter in Sender and One Coaxial Cascade output in Receiver for great extension flexibility
- Support 5 layers Cascadable for up to 600M 1080p video transmission and up to 10 TVs/Displays/Projectors connected
- BNC connector designed for solid coaxial connection
- HDMI v1.3b, HDCP Compliant
- Hassle free plug-n-play, install in seconds



PCE122 Specifications:

- Input Connector - Sender: COAX BNC x 2 (1 to 2 Splitter)
- Output Connector - Receiver: HDMI Type A x 1, COAX BNC x 1 (Cascade Out)
- Video Bandwidth: 2.97Gb/s data Rates
- Dimension: 92.4x 117.8x29mm
- Weight: 249g
- Power Consumption: 5Watts (Max)

1 to 1 Extension



1 to Many Distribution



Madison AV Expands Product Range & Specialist Team

Madison Technologies have recently expanded their range of HDMI distribution solutions to include a suite of products from leading manufacturer Avara Innovator Corp. These include extenders such as the PCE122 featured above, the PB5000 HDMI over IP Broadcaster, HDMI over Cat5 extenders, Splitter and Matrix products and a complete range of HDMI V1.4 Professional AV cables. These, in conjunction with the range of Hall Research Technologies solutions, and Madison's complete range of AV cable and connectors places Madison AV as the one-stop-shop for Hi-Definition AV infrastructure products.

Also new at Madison are products from award-winning Swiss Digital Signage manufacturer, SoinetX. Featuring the innovative HMP100™ Hyper Media Player, Madison now offer digital signage hardware and software solutions, backed locally by factory trained product specialists.

For more information on this expanded product range, contact the specialist Madison AV team directly on **1800 00 77 80** or email av@madisontech.com.au

CLOSED

TECH TRAINING - MOVING FORWARDS

Learning from what went wrong at Julius College

This email from a student was not unusual at Julius Events College.

“I refuse to bump out on Monday. I get punished for everything including getting emotional harassment from my peers”.

After training several hundred school leavers, college staff were left in no doubt that a few of them are seriously deluded about life.

At the end of 2010 JuliusMedia quit the accredited training business after eight hard years learning the national education regulatory landscape. We shut the doors, made sure every student was looked after, and archived the records. We moved out.

This article is intended as an insiders roundup of what is happening, and what is defective, in the tech training landscape. Now that we are untangled from the education bureaucracy this allows you a rare insight.

Short Courses And School Training

We started with school students doing short courses - with some combining the courses to get to Certificate Three, Live Production, Theatre and Events. The short course peak came in 2005 - but then schools in Australia started rolling out Certificate Three Entertainment as Year 11 and 12 Vocational Education

Training (VET) courses.

This is an accident of timing, because the national curriculum determined senior kids should do VET courses, so every training package was examined for Certificate II programs. Then they upped the scope to Certificate III. A flock of school teachers are trained at NIDA and presumably in other states, and set free to deliver 240 hours of entertainment teaching over 2 years.

In the school entertainment VET training course, high school kids are allocated just ten hours over two years to learn basic live sound and ten hours for basic lighting. They also do ten hours of basic video. What has been observed can be very poor. With most full time technical students at Julius College coming from a school VET course, you'd expect they could set up a mic stand or hang a light the correct way up. Most could not, despite having been assessed.

A simple skills test should be applied to any job applicant carrying a qualification. Bolt three bits of truss together the right way; safely hang and connect a light, put a mic on a boom stand and route the cable, setup and make noise come out of a speaker plugged into the auxiliary output of a mixer. Know the difference between VGA and DVI; 4:3 vs 16:9. All Certificate III (Theatre & Events, aka 'Entertainment') grads have supposedly been assessed as good to do that!

IBSA: The Industry Skills

Council

Nationally the body charged with maintaining the framework of the training CUE03 (training package) is an 'Industry Skills Council' known as IBSA - Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA). But when it comes to the 'Cultural Industries' IBSA appears to be a secret society. They have not ever responded meaningfully to CX, or to Julius Events College, since IBSA acquired responsibility for CUE03 from Create Australia.

Victorian Trainer Jeff Hammersley endorses our criticism of IBSA. "Their approach to the Entertainment Industry Training Package seems to be very lazy. The release of the latest version, without any real announcement or consultation seems symptomatic of this. A week after the new version came into effect I couldn't find any announcement on the IBSA website. The old version is still the only one you can buy from them".

But much deeper chasms exist between the performing arts industries and IBSA. In 2009 a 'who's who' of the training stakeholders were circulated a submission from TAFESA Adelaide Centre for the Arts concerning problems with the sudden imposition of 'Version Three' of CUE03 that had been imposed without notice by IBSA.

"Many applicable employment outcomes cannot be accommodated within the proscriptive structure. Entertainment industry work and employment practices are not reflected

Continued Page 18 ----->

A GUIDE TO THE CONFUSING ACRONYMS AND TERMS USED IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

AQTF: Australian Quality Training Framework

ASSESSMENT: Can be written, verbal, oral and must be thorough

ASSESSOR: Must hold a Certificate Four in TAA or TAE plus the Qualification being assessed

AUDITOR: Humorless door individual concerned with procedure not substance

C/NYC: Competent or Not Yet Competent. Students must become competent in each unit of competency

CUE03: Entertainment Industry Training Package

CUF07: Screen and Media Training Package

CUS09: Music Training Package

DISTINCTION: RTO's cannot 'grade' a student. Merit must NOT be recognised

ELEMENT: Part of a Unit of Competency

EXAM: RTO's are not allowed to call them this, rather they should be a 'written assessment'

EXPECTATION: A yawning gap between fantasy and reality. Student expects a job in a

recording studio (fantasy). RTO knows this will not happen, which becomes reality

FEE HELP: Where the government lends you the cost of the course and taxes you more to recover it, plus 20%

HECS: See Fee Help

HEP: Higher education provider, like a University. Doesn't have to abide by AQTF

IBSA: Innovation and Business Skills Australia are the industry skills council

NATIONALLY RECOGNISED QUALIFICATION: Certificate or Diploma issued under AQTF by an RTO or TAFE

NYC: Not Yet Competent. Students must become competent in each unit of competency

OUTCOME: A course should meet the needs of industry and produce a job. This doesn't happen often enough

PAPER: One Diploma kills around fifteen plantation pines

RTO: Registered training organization. Same accreditation as a TAFE

SCHOOL VET: Where kids get a

Certificate III and a taste of an industry that's highly variable, depending on their teacher

STATE TRAINING AUTHORITY: Each state has one, in NSW it is VETAB

TAA: Training and Assessment

TAFE: Massive government funded chain of registered training organizations

THOUSANDS: Number of students enrolled in Zombie Quals in Australia each year

TRAINER: Must hold a Certificate Four in TAA or TAE plus the Qualification being assessed

TRAINING PACKAGE: Set of Units and rules for assessment. Does not contain actual lesson plans or assessment tasks

UOC: Unit of Competency. Each qualification has a number of these

VET: Vocational Education and Training. This is what an RTO (and TAFE) do

VETAB: The NSW regulator of RTO's and TAFE's

ZOMBIE QUAL: One that does not lead to employment. Example: Diploma of Music Industry, Technical Production



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Tech Training - moving forwards Continued...

in or supported by the structure and content of the qualifications".

This alone should have rang alarm bells at the Council, whose charter is to be 'Australia's recognized voice on skills and training for the Cultural and Related Industries'.

TAFESA went on: "The validity of CUE60103 Advanced Diploma in Design has been seriously compromised by some of the changes in Version 3. The CUF qualifications discussed also resemble the 1996-97 draft versions of CUE qualifications that pre-date CUE98 and which the entertainment industry refused to endorse because the qualifications were unusable and not a reflection of industry contributions to the development process."

Despite the loud and accurate protests, IBSA remains detached and uninterested in industry input. Which carries long term ramifications since they can and do impose training framework.

Croc Fest

The federal government awarded Julius College a contract in 2004 to train indigenous youth during the touring Croc Festival. Awarded at the last possible minute, the contract was almost unworkable, containing provisions that transferred the course material to the Commonwealth. But the big sting came in the tail - we would only be paid for 'indigenous' trainees.

We rolled into Katherine. "You indigenous?" I asked a blonde girl with blue eyes. "Yeah" she laughed. We ended up training more kids than we were paid for, because like blondie, we could not morally claim when we had serious doubts about the students' ethnic mix. Turns out no one checked.

At Derby the local high school principal gave me a dressing down when I arrived in advance to recruit trainees. "Last year the f---ing TAFE ran this and my kids never got their Certificates", he roared. I had to personally guarantee we would abide by our contract. I heard the same thing in Geraldton. There are many TAFE's around the nation.

The offending TAFE was not in the towns mentioned.

Around 50 kids were trained and we were paid \$204,000 for eight

weeks work. The costs were very high, including a \$40,000 fee to the tour organisers. To our credit, half the kids got through with a Certificate. To our surprise no indigenous trainee applied for a scholarship in Sydney we offered.

Regulators

It was 5am one cold winters morning in 2009 at College, and every light was on. Jimmy and Andy were frantically pouring over course materials. Monique and our two consultants - Cara and Narelle - were updating documents ahead of the arrival of an audit team from our regulator.

What should have been a routine one-day audit turned into a twenty-month battle.

We took the regulator to the ultimate appeal forum, the Administrative Decisions Tribunal. It was all over a matter of principle: we didn't think our auditors followed the processes in their own audit manual. We felt their approach was wrong. It all ended in a circular whirlpool of submission and resubmission of materials to the Tribunal. "This is the moveable feast paradigm", said the judicial member hearing our case. "Yes it is, member", agreed the lawyer for the regulator.

The NSW regulator is VETAB and like most other states, they take a no-assistance approach. You don't know whether they will approve your methods or systems until they rule you are in breach.

"Get a consultant" is their response. Most of their auditors are also consultants, so there appears to be potential for a lot of employment generation based on non-compliances. We had consultants - they almost lived with us for three months, and were very good. They were often in the dark about the conflicting nuances of whatever it was that VETAB would report back to us.

It appears almost all colleges (a registered training organization and a TAFE operate under identical rules) are not fully compliant at audit times.

You can't just sell your college either - if the controlling shareholding changes, you need to reapply and start again. The timeframe to become registered is at least a year. The regulator says 3 months. SAE have managed to do it, because the purchaser is already a registered college.

When in 2005 we changed the name

of the training company from Julius Media Pty Ltd to Julius Events College Pty Ltd, some flunky at the regulator insisted we needed to re-register and start again. The fool did not understand that a company entity continues under one Australian Company Number. Same thing when we discontinued accreditation for international students: "you have to move all your international students immediately to another college", said the flunky. This was because our international accreditation expired just before our college year ended in December. We ignored him.

I will not miss running a business in one of the most regulated environments in Australia.

TAFES

When we first decided to train, in 2001, a very helpful and senior TAFE dude with industry connections suggested a joint venture. What followed was a farce where the decent guy was forced to resign 'on health grounds' and an array of TAFE management worked hard to undo a contracted deal.

The golden moment was when a high level manager in the executive enclave at this particular TAFE entertained me with jargon like "we don't mind co-oper-tition". My Iced VoVo remained naked on its little China saucer as I marveled at the brazen uselessness of this taxpayer funded oxygen thief.

There was a lot of tut-tutting and head shaking at our naive and unconventional training methods in their empty facility across one of their many course breaks. Better empty than useful, so it all went legal, and we went off and became registered in our own right as a Registered Training Organisation. Powerful enemies were made.

There are many good people in some TAFE colleges around the nation. Give them a chance.

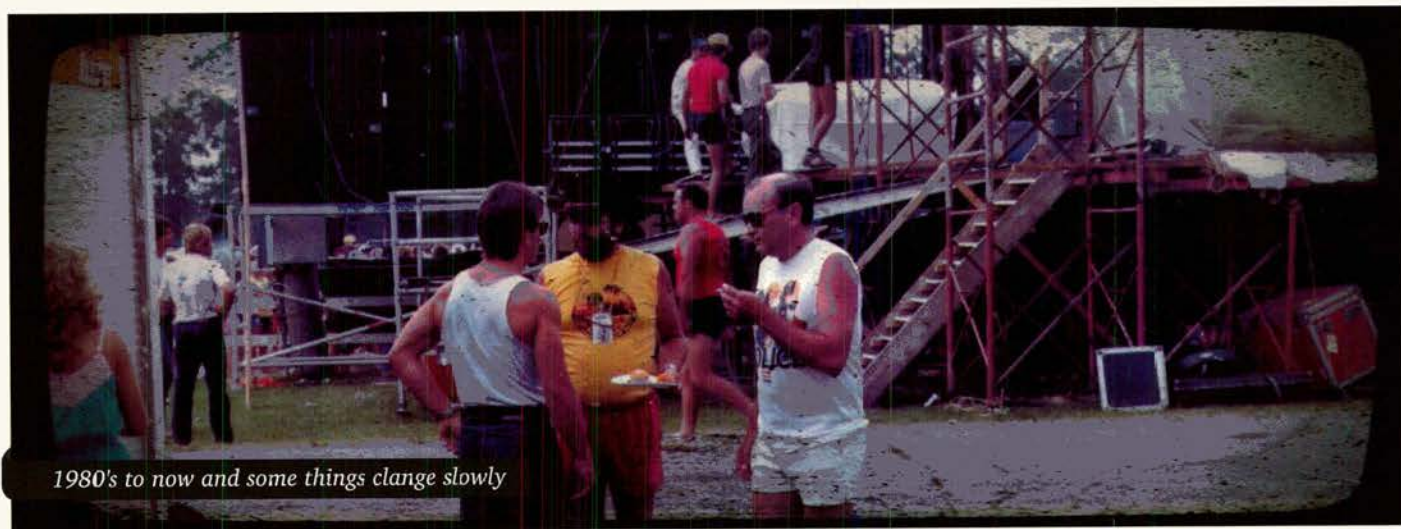
Student Life

Our students worked unbelievably hard across the year, and had to endure too many written assessments and assignments. They never really understood why, and how could they? It defies logic, but we had to do it that way.

The sad part is the Competent or

2011 The Industry Rant Essay

'Get a proper job' and pay scales seems to go together. Where are we now that we have a national award and in theory should all earn enough to live well? Asking 'What is Wrong with the Industry', CX got a lot of mail. Inside, read about MONEY, (HOW TO) GET PAID, OLD SCHOOL and whether having a QUALIFICATION makes any difference. With more besides..



"My main gripe is some people do not treat our industry as a true career. It's something you do for fun- an ego trip. Most people get into the business via a passion to perform (behind the scenes) which does not require qualifications if you are keen, focused and driven", says Chris Vine.

"I've been in the business since 1977, seen a lot of changes, worked overseas but still I am asked 'when will I get a proper job' by most of my family. Income wise if my wife (who was a teacher and now a principal) had not supported me throughout my working life we would be destitute or I would have had to drop out of the business to support a family".

While Chris Vine is maintaining his love of the industry, up North Chris Kluge has issues with the pay scales at Darwin Entertainment Centre where he is head of the lighting dept. Bravely he has allowed us to identify the venue and himself.

"We're having trouble attracting and retaining technical crew in the Territory. I've been a technician and production manager for 12 years, I have a Diploma in live events production, a basic riggers ticket, test and tag, EWP, forklift, senior first aid ticket and am a fire warden

"The award says I'm worth \$19.70 an hour as the head of the Darwin Entertainment Centre lighting department (my current position) and I don't qualify for overtime unless I work over 12 hours a day or over 38 hours a week. I've had this described by outsiders as sad, embarrassing, a joke and just plain unbelievable. I think it's all of those and more.

"Outside of the entertainment industry, I've just been offered \$38 per hour to utilise just my basic riggers license and the prospects for advancement are excellent. In my current position, working all sorts of hours, up to seven days a week for the last 4 years, I've just managed to get to the \$50K pa mark. Live production is worth billions to the Australian economy. How can we attract and retain workers in this industry when the local pizza delivery guy earns more per hour than the award for live performance workers offers?"

"My gripe is companies not adhering to the new award conditions", says Andrew Gissing. Apparently the escape clause is that you pay your employees more than the award requires and then that gets you out of

needing to comply (they say).

"So they pay for Monday to Friday 9-5 work, but when it comes to after-hours, weekends and after midnight, they don't pay more 'cause of their supposed 'we pay more than the award'.

"I like to do the right thing and this has priced me out of some gigs on Sundays. I quote with double-time for my hired help. I'm competing against those that don't."

"A close relative of this is contract labor. So you don't have any employees you just contract them in and negotiate a rate that's agreeable to the company and the contractor.

"So I fear for some of the young guys who are getting into this business 'cause they love it, but by the time they finally think about superannuation they will be close to 40 and whoops, lots of time gone by that could have been building the super fund". Lyle Walters agrees.

Continued Page 20 ----->

Essay continued..

"The companies I sub to still just see it as a contract between two parties at an agreed price, which is fine for us older guys who seem to get what we want but I do worry about those young guys and girls running around festivals getting very little. When I mentioned the new award (as per the CX article) especially the double rate on Sunday to a big production company, I was told that the production company would never be putting the crews interest before theirs!"

But Shannon Gobell has more faith.

"Pay levels can be a concern, although I don't believe it to be the problem you have suggested it is. In most instances there is a minimum wage set down as per the Live Performance Industry Award and from that employers can pay anything they like above the award of course.

"From state to state their will always be variances as there are different living costs and some states find it harder to find quality staff and some states demand higher quality staff and therefore pay well above award to attract this type of staff person. I do however believe that the premium government run or backed events in each state should be setting the examples and paying their experienced staff what the average Australian market rate is for that position or even paying whatever they need to pay to attract the type of person and experience they are seeking rather than being forced under government rules to pay stock standard award rates.

" At the end of the day if a Theatre Tech in a regional theatre is earning \$60,000 a year and is happy living in that area and doesn't want to seek to increase his wage opportunities by putting themselves into situations in

other roles around Australia that will do that then they should not grizzle, so long as they are paid the award or better."

But outside the big cities a theme emerges.

"Since finishing at Julius College I haven't been short of work but the added stress levels dealing with pay and employers that want everything for nothing wears you out. I have had times where I have not been paid what was agreed upon", says Brendon Vitiello.

"Not only does it put me out of pocket I feel as if Technicians don't receive the respect deserved. I also don't understand why people with qualifications are overlooked. I have been through this many times trying to get a job at the local entertainment centre. A few months back I volunteered to help out with a musical production there with a local theatre group.

"They were thrilled with my skill level and knowledge which really brought the show together. At one stage having to re patch the full lighting rig into 3-phase distro's during intermission when the lighting desk died, over 300 patch points, 12 dimmers, and 20 minutes to get it working. At that moment the staff and techs there realizing my knowledge thanked me.

"But come the time when I handed my resume to them and told them my history they kind of just made it look as if I didn't exist and was just an amateur. I know I haven't been in the industry long but from my experiences I would be a great asset to them but they refuse to recognize this.

"Whether this is for the safety of their own jobs I don't know. But to me it hurts because no matter how hard I try I'm never recognized for my qualifications and knowledge. Some of the people there can't even operate the equipment. It's embarrassing".

"I have adopted the new awards", says Chris Vine. But we are losing work to others who have not jumped on board. I recently had a guy approach me looking for work who was being paid \$11 hr as a contactor with his own ABN! That's completely unsustainable".

CX reminds readers that Fair Work Australia is supposed to assist you be paid fairly, for work done in Australia. Let us know if they don't.

GETTING PAID

It's a shame CX can't publish names. It takes a Court Judgment before we can report a non-payer and even then, if they appeal and win, we are badly exposed.

Ross Portener explains how he dealt with some miscreants:

"Recovery of unpaid production hire. Sent a copy of the unpaid invoice to every international agent for this particular high profile Australian artist. Worded correctly, 'without prejudice to theorganisation'. Money was recovered in 3 days after 15 months wait. Emailed all agents 'thanks for their assistance'. This was an independent artist with their own management. Being aware of who you are dealing with will determine your approach".

We think it's risky, but well done, Ross!

So his next one comes after one year of chasing the debt.

"Sent copies of invoice to all entertainment managers where the entertainer was to perform during their current tour. Received replies from all of them stating that they would pass it on. One venue manager said that he had contacted the entertainer's manager and said that they were not welcome to perform at the venue until they had paid money owed to the production company (me). Met the entertainers manager and collected the debt before the performer went on stage".

Ross is on fire here - we think he should collect debts for others in our industry!

Here is Case Number 3, in the Ross Portener file of shame:

"I located the offenders Facebook page and left information thereon regarding outstanding invoice. Contacted (emailed) a gentleman who was on the board of a high profile venue where the entertainer worked regularly. This board member is a Barrister who is on the board of many government run organisations and a founder of a number of law institutions.

"His email said he was too expensive (to hire as a Barrister) for the nature of the case but did give me a wealth of advice. Extracts of this advice were sent to the entertainer, the invoice was paid in 2 days".

CX applauds this loudly but must point out that the offenders could



launch legal action against you if you circulate materials that they use to prove you damaged their business. Generally we would say 'bring it on', but the last thing anyone wants is an open-ended court battle where the legal costs often bankrupt the innocent party.

General agreement exists that staff and contractors (where they are doing 'staff' type duties) must be paid weekly. Plenty of firms are on record with CX to say they do, and plenty are on notice that they simply must hence.

SOME SUGGESTIONS:

- 1 Confirm every job with an email stating your terms and the agreed pay BEFORE you do the work.
- 2 Make it clear your terms are 7 days.
- 3 Send a 'Statement of Claim' if unpaid and unresponded.
- 4 Be ready to visit the local court and take action.
- 5 Tell CX.

OLD SCHOOL

This is a generic term we take to mean 'Old Mentality' and sadly it arises from time to time. CX gets the occasional dose where someone is either tired and emotional, or just irrational. But rude and aggressive is so 1980.

"A lot of the industry is run by people who are from the 'can you fight your way out of a pub' era. Or 'do you do the correct drugs, and like the right footy team' mindset", says a seasoned professional who has toured the world for thirty years.

"Once at (a production firm) we had a meeting on how we all could improve things in the work place. I mentioned that the management was ex roadies so why didn't they go do management training and learn to manage, as they are not crew any more. Didn't go down well".

CX saw a crew chief abusing his crew and others at a show recently. He was an employee of a company, thus he represented the firm. But there is a risk in naming and shaming guys like this.

"Naming and shaming is always a hard one", says an industry guy. "It can turn into anger and negativity towards the namer (that would be CX!) "I have worked with some great guys who when put in a position of responsibility for everything, the pressure eats at them."

Andrew Chambers puts it well. "Too many grumpy old bastards who've come up through the school of hard knocks, humiliation and exploitation. The torch passes to the next generation and we all get burned."

"I'm also trained in HR", says Mark Finlayson from Hobart. "The type of behavior mentioned is absolutely unacceptable at any time, any job, any business. This is not just the industry 'way' but also a method, which is way

"Your eyes won't believe your ears!"

Lou Mannarin

Live Engineer for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra



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out of date and completely useless for productivity and loyalty these days. Time to change or get out!"

SCARED OR QUALIFIED?

What are the values and virtues of a qualification? Entertainment and broadcast in Australia are the last places on earth where highly skilled people are not encouraged to hold a qualification. This provides opportunities for easy entry to the business, but what happens when suddenly OH&S legislation demands proof of competency?

"I am a huge believer in having a qualification", says Lighting Designer Greg Yates. "I will always hunt down graduates of WAAPA, NIDA, BAPA, JULIUS, etc first. I do embrace competency measures, but its still down to individual skills. No two guys with a Certificate 3 from Julius are equal. It would be great to have an industry wide competency recognition in the same way the building industry has the green/white card."

"In the UK Insurance companies for venues/theatres/events started to insist that all work of any kind was carried out by a competent person, which meant training", reports George Tarbuck.

"Being a technician was seen in the UK as a stepping stone to somewhere else and so qualifications started to matter for one's future career.

"Shows got more complicated and so you had to have people who knew what they were doing and could prove it, especially in the West End where for the past fifteen years they only employ you as a sparks if you have actually been trained as one. Regardless of how much you know about lighting.

"In the UK we have moved towards more qualifications, not less. Having spoken to people it seems that in Oz the cult of the enthusiastic amateur is alive and well. This may explain why if you can get work in Oz then why bother with really good training?"

From Scotland to Mark Finlayson in Hobart. "I've never been sure that training would be worth it. I know I have some industry experience, and while not as much as a lot in the industry, I feel that some training courses don't come close to teaching what I know.

"Research approximately fifteen years ago told me that my experience back then was more than what I could learn from the local branch of a very large industry training body - they wanted me to pay over \$2,000 for nine months of training that would focus on studio (not my line of interest) with a limited section on live audio".

Andrew Chambers in WA echoes this. "Too many colleges / TAFES seem to be well beyond any practical partnerships with industry such that students have no industry experience beyond a singular attachment. Staff find the comforts of collegial life are far easier than the rough and tumble of a fast paced and technologically challenging industry".

Many people told CX that experience outweighs a qualification.

"Surely there could be an accreditation for experience", says Kim Welch. The problem is that there is, but the complexity of obtaining a Certificate or a Diploma based on skills recognition frightens people.

Then there is school-based training.

"There is a lot of money being poured into high schools to develop areas of expertise in entertainment", reports Chris Vine. "I have been contacted by three recently to ask me to consult on the design and setting up of teaching facilities.

"Most of the students don't fit into the school life. Of 18 students recently, there were just two that you would consider marginally employable. The teacher's are out of their depth, not having enough experience, which is the greatest test of all".

"Training I'm afraid will never replace experience and until a system is brought in that gives everyone a

suitable RPL qualification and we start fresh from that point. It will never be widely adapted by the industry", says Shannon Gobell

"Until we can all be brought into one national system and all existing workers RPL'ed to respectable levels based on experience there will simply never be a strong training industry for the entertainment industry. The demand needs to be there first I'm afraid."

Shannon is both right and wrong, because the system is there now.

RECOGNISE MY SKILLS!

Very few colleges offer what is called RPL (recognized prior learning) or RCC (recognized current competency) despite being legally required to do so.

CX will soon publish a list of colleges and TAFE'S with a how-to guide to force them to recognize your experience. Let's make them be accountable, and make them provide the service they are legally required to provide! They want to take fees off kids, and then let them work for it.

That will inflame a lot of educators, who absolutely HATE having to deal one-on-one, don't liaise with industry, and insist on running long courses where 'one size fits all!' Here comes a campaign...

That's the last word.

Oh and OHS (safety) was mentioned in passing across 30,000 words from 60 people, most of whom didn't want to be identified, and a lot who didn't want to be quoted. Which makes it a nice vent, but one that doesn't appear here.

As always, CX will protect your identity if that is what you require.

Be heard and keep talking.

CX

Collated by Julius Grafton

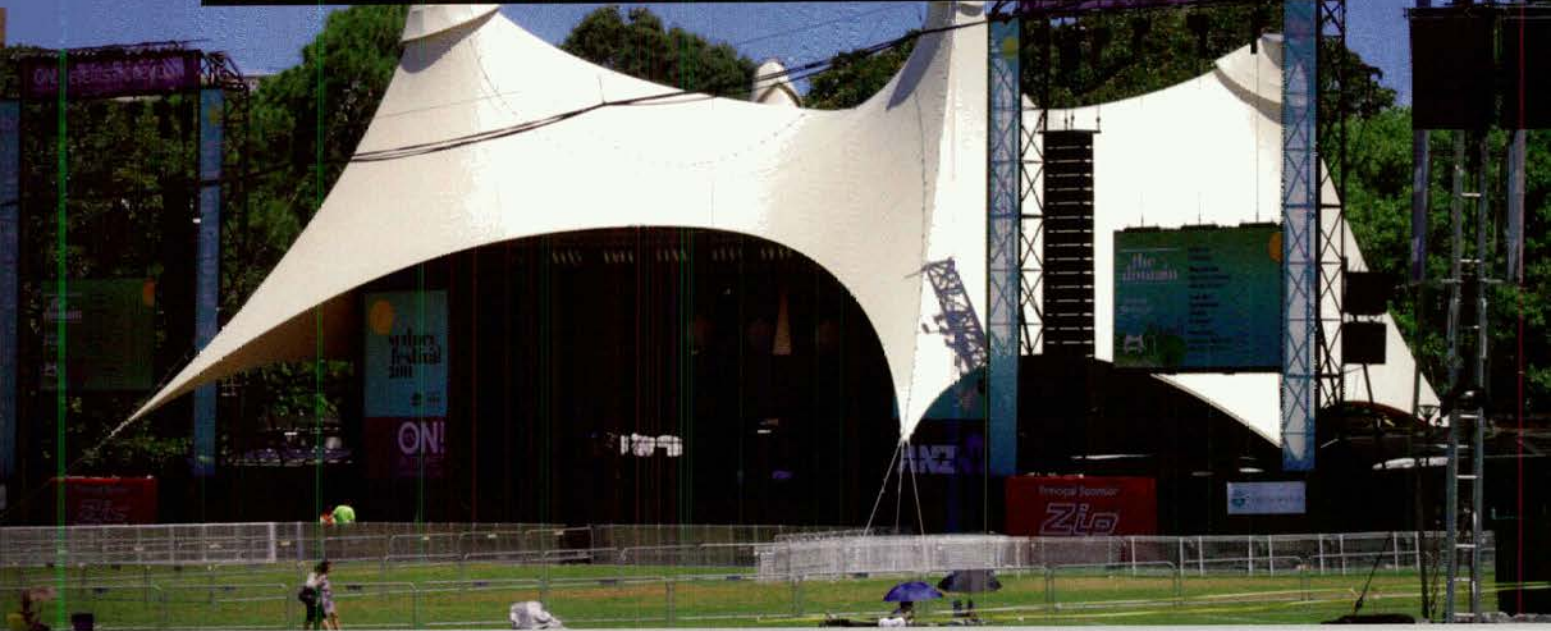


Everyone is here for more than just money!

CODA

CELEBRATE 21 YEARS

WITH FULL FESTIVAL AUDIO



CX visits Sydney in Summer to see how 'best practice' audio is delivered at the Sydney Festival

By Julius Grafton

In 1977 Stephen 'Festival' Hall directed the first Sydney Festival that replaced a very tired Waratah Festival. Instead of a cheesy parade and a set of static displays in Hyde Park, Sydney festw roof), and Roger Barratt did the lights. A lighting crew led by John Western and Wally Sloss, with another half dozen including the author slaved for days looming cables and hanging two hundred lights on wobbling bending bars. The night went off with banes and booze.

A few years on and Angels bass player Chris Bailey was knocked out by a flying beer bottle, heralding a rethink.

Thirty Four years later the festival is magnificent, probably the largest

community event in Australia. Somehow the politics have worked out, and barring insanity the event will continue as the Arts highlight in Sydney each year.

Coda Audio has held the audio contract for many years, and the scale of the event is impressive. The first 1977 event sucked up all the production available in Sydney, while the 2011 event was the focus of some production firms - Chameleon (lights), TDC (screens) and Butlers and ESS (staging). Add on power, security, and the very efficient events team employed by the festival, and you have a serious star to the year.

FIRST NIGHT

Saturday 8th January dawned clear, where weather in Sydney this summer had thus far been difficult. A blue sky was welcome, and the Coda crew arrived at their various stages with a mild breeze and laid back security. Many Sydney streets had already been closed, and systems had been equalised and checked the day before.

But the Phil Meltzer and Dan Ricketts stage in Chifley Square would have a road open until 5pm. They had the

stage with line array line checked, then rolled a multicore over the street to meet the control and the DJ stage.

"I have high frequency blockers to deal with", Meltzer said, pointing to the two palm trees whose palm clusters sat exactly where you don't want. That stage would feature a Polynesian theme against images projected onto the curved façade of what was once Qantas house.

In Hyde Park (North) the main ('Lawn') stage had a slew of acts including something called '21 acts in 20 minutes'. Andy Mac was soundchecking on a Yamaha M7CL out front, while Alister 'Gadget Man' Munro had the scurdcheck intensive gig at the side of the stage with another M7CL. Gadget Man is known as such because of his tool pouches that contain almost anything required at any time. Presumably he wears them to and from work, and hopefully takes them off when at home watching TV.

Almost diagonally opposite was a stage called 'Silver Screen' where a honky tonk piano guy would play and sing in a gravelly voice as black and white movies projected. Some

Continued Page 24 ----->



Festival foh at Martin Place

MSL 4 Meyer boxes were set high on a scaffold either side of the stage, presumably raised there with a forklift days before.

Yet more production elements ran down the Central Avenue, where a new installation of Snow Machines met with sixty mirroballs and some lasers. Coda had 12 Meyer UPA-1P cabinets on stands, with USW subwoofers, arranged as a line along one side of the avenue.

Across the street in St Mary's Cathedral forecourt was a relay system.

Down at Martin Place, Anatole Day and Tim Dodd dealt with soundchecks for Arrested Development while Garry Hall drove Meyer M3D line array which has virtually no spill out the rear, due to design. Several M3D delay towers were positioned up the mall, each with its own generator and security guard. In itself, this stage was audio equal (in output) to the first festival site at the Opera House way back in 1977. But it wildly exceeded that pioneering moment with foldback sends and technology; and sound quality.

But the Domain is the focal point for the Festival of Sydney. It sits just before the harbour fronted Botanical Gardens, east of Martin Place and north of Hyde Park. Here a large number of people, estimated between 40,000 and 100,000 (depending on media estimate!) can gather to enjoy a program that always features international acts. The Festival owns a stage structure that is unique in design, and which stays in place for January as different Festival shows, like Symphony in the Park, roll through.

CODA IN 2011

Before the Festival I visited the strange period-piece warehouse that houses Coda in Sydney's Mascot area. It's been used as a film set for a show in the 1970's. They don't need a sign. The firm has been a live audio specialist provider since 1990, when founders Michael Wilkie and Philip Murphy worked for theatre audio guru Ron Barlow.

They picked up the workload from Ron as he retired. Ron still gives talks and has a passion for audio. After some time, Philip set up a Singapore branch to service a contract they won, and eventually the partners split off, Philip in Singapore (Coda Audio Services Pte Ltd) and Michael in Sydney - Coda Audio Services Pty Ltd.

Coda are often 'under the radar', with less visible presence than the big operators like Jands Production Services (now known as JPJ after the merger with Johnston Audio services in 2010) and Norwest Productions - where many higher profile tours and shows happen. But Coda have an enviable book of work, including Womadelaide (in Adelaide).

Coda do a variety of work that covers a niche from corporate to complex festivals, as well as hires.

APPROACH

Coda are methodical, and they plan things carefully. All live sound production firms aspire to do the same thing. For example, the Festival of Sydney shows are all large scale free events, so no certainty exists as to audience numbers. The various sites are all outdoors (on the First Night) and more often than not it rains at some point in time.

The various planning considerations include safety, weather, noise laws, show continuity, customer service and sound quality - not necessarily in



Festival domain FOH

that order.

Luke Hutchins was the project manager for Coda at Sydney Festival. He made sure the 24 crew, six trucks and assorted loaders were in the right place, at the right time, with the right inventory. He worked the countless details into a show book that has everything you possibly need to know in almost 40 pages.

CX walked the Festival in the hours before First Night with Coda CEO Michael Wilkie. His style is more laid back than some, but at each stage and with each crew we met, the response echoed good relationships. Some places he was also interacting with other crew on a friendly basis. Not too many audio firm CEO's would know the names of working crew from other firms outside their area of specialty.

It becomes evident that the 'Coda culture' is a mix of elements including ease of engagement. Most production firms have a vibe that comes down from the top guy.

FFN11 (as the event was known to the crew) had contractors from A - Z across the industry - 3200 Lighting did power, Big Picture and TDC screens and projections, Butlers, Staging Rentals and ESS (Staging), Chameleon (lights) and others.

BIG AUDIO

It's estimated that Sydney's Domain could hold 100,000 people at a free event though no one really knows. The crowd can stretch off into the distance, and it has great access making it safe. The Festival owns a stage structure that has been in use for around twenty years at Domain, and is rented to other festivals across Summer.

Like all city sites, Domain has some noise issues mostly associated with Sydney Hospital which sits nearest to the stage. For this reason site noise



Photo1: Festiva Domain monitor consoles
 Photo2: Michael Wilkie & Luke Hutchins
 Photo3: Julius with Scott Bason
 Photo4: Festival MSL6
 Photo5: Festival MD3 array

monitoring is crucial, and PA People deploy their new SP.net for this. It makes proper sound design at the Domain more crucial.

Michael Wilkie went with Meyer Sound Laboratories loudspeaker systems a long time ago. "For a number of different reasons", he says. "I guess the main one is the quality of the engineering and research that has gone into their products over a thirty year period. They always have good engineering reasons for the things that they do. Their attention to an excellent phase response and consistency of phase response across the different loudspeaker systems would be a good example of that".

"(But) other less high falutin' reasons would be that when you run a rental company, you want to buy products that don't break often, and do what they are supposed to do when you send them out on a job; having a consistency of product in the inventory makes it easier to mix and match gear for different design challenges."

This is evident at the Domain.

The main flown PA included 38 x Meyer Milo cabinets with 2 x Meyer Milo 120 cabinets (arranged as 19 + 1 on each side - the 120's are used as a down fill).

At stage left two Meyer MSL-6 long throw cabinets on the hospital side (one above the other) give an

additional 30 degrees of horizontal coverage, as the site is asymmetrical. Michael says they are the only narrow horizontal dispersion high power boxes he has - a normal line array box goes 90 degrees or 120 degrees wide.

On the ground were 10 x Meyer 700-HP subs (5 per side), and another 2 x Meyer Milo 120 cabinets as front fill.

On each of the 8 delay towers (located about 100 metres from the main stage in an arc), were 2 x Meyer MSL4 cabinets.

This year the Festival headline acts at Domain didn't requisition a digital console. A Midas Heritage 3000 with an XL 200 wingboard was used at front of house. Monitor world had Coda's Heritage 4000 console with a Verona sub console.

The proof of the value of the job is being booked again, and based on the 2011 Festival First Night, Coda could expect to be back on site next year.



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A LIFE IN LIGHT

Meet Pip Robinson

By Julius Grafton

Pip Robinson started with the best kind of lighting gig in the early 70's. He worked followspot at the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park - where Jimi Hendrix first burnt a guitar. Like Pip, the theatre is still standing.

The followspots were Super Troupers - made by Strong Corporation in the USA, and you had to manually strike the arc to get them going.

There were a few small health and safety concerns but no one knew about them. Asbestos sheaved cables were one - most 1960's era lights came with nice soft white cables, you could dig your fingernails in and come away with some white powder if you tried hard enough.

Then there was the ozone radiation, which is not recommended for confined spaces. The Super Trouper has an exhaust port on top which usually ended up having a smoke stack like on a pot belly stove, so the Ozone just came back at the operator. Blindness could arise from viewing the light source inside the unit. Aside from these trivialities, the thing was a monster. Pip knew how to manually strike the arc and feed the carbon rods in.

Abba wrote a song about how bright these things were.

Super Trouper beams are gonna blind me

But I won't feel blue

Like I always do

'Cause somewhere in the crowd there's you

"We used to help the bands load in, do the show, help them load out. A different band every night", Pip reminisces of the early 1970's. Then he went on tour - with Slade. He was LD for a slew of bands - Teardrops Explode, XTC, ABC, Japan and BeBop Deluxe.

These days Pip is an account manager at Chameleon in Sydney,



and knows his way around the staggeringly large arsenal of new and highly technical equipment the firm owns. "Back in the UK, early days everything was heavy, slow and hard", he says by way of contrast with now.

We reminisce about great lighting moments. "Bowie played at Finsbury Park", he says. "He opened with the followspot irised all the way in, just on his hands, clasped together in front of his chest. Then he opened his hands, and drags the circle of light wider until he is inside it".

Simple but brilliant.

“Talking Heads did a thing where the lights were set low and slowly got brighter. Like in Les Miserables where Eponine dies and the light gets whiter and brighter”.

Between touring Europe and Chameleon, Pip came to Australia partly because his dad is Australian - and also because his German wife liked the idea. He worked for Baldwin Lights. "Ian Couch and Peter Milne were there, it was a good team". Then at Graftons when Tim Kennard was in charge. "(The late) Roger Barratt called me one day and suggested I come to Chameleon, so here we are!"

Pip's daily fare at Chameleon includes a lot of corporate work.

"Attend meetings, plan crew and trucking, plot the gear, sometimes design the show. I represent the company. I think what makes this job satisfying is that no matter what the show, at the end people go home happy".

Over Christmas Pip supervised the Festival of Sydney work that Chameleon has done for a long time - his first time on this particular job. "Festival are very well organized", he tells me as we sit in the boardroom at Chameleon's large facility in Sydney's south. "John Baily has production managers, and then these is an ASM (assistant stage manager) for each stage. Mark Hammer and Gavin Swift did most of the outdoor show designs, Mark sent me a global wish list of gear months earlier, and the quotes come from that. Now we are making it all happen."

Downstairs on the huge Chameleon floor, three trucks are backed in to the front entrance and another cluster of semis are in the holding yard. Forklifts dart in and out of the highbays, stacked ten meters high with endless 'meat-racks' of lights on wheels parked underneath. A mountain of moving light roadcases are stacked four high down one end - millions and millions of dollars worth.

Tonnes of cables are in pallet bins, miles of truss of all sizes down the steel end of the jumbo jet sized hanger of a warehouse.

On one side are little cities of departments, a long line of dimmer racks are being prepared for Dr Zhivago in Melbourne. LED fixtures live in another area; at the end is a moving light hospital. Swarms of black T shirted guys and the occasional girl move purposefully around, overseen by the omni-present company head Tony Davies who is always on the floor supervising everything, each time we visit. He keeps it all moving, in and out, prep here, load there, tipping another trailer back in over that side. This January the place is working around the clock.

Pip stops talking to answer his phone. "Yes, there are sixty mirrorballs ready for pickup. They're all there - ask Tony where they are", he tells the caller from the floor. Sixty mirrorballs, all under 24", go to the Festival to be hung down a Sydney street. They join 180 moving lights, 100 LED fixtures and more than 300 conventionals.

"If it rains we are ready as well", Pip says. "All public areas we cable ramp or have the cables out of reach. Plugs are taped up, and we spray them with Wizard's Piss (a water repellent).

When the Festival winds down, Big Day Out starts up. Then the corporate shows roll around again, and Dr. Zhivago opens. Night follows day, and where there's night, you need light.

α



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France Millo - Backline/Guitar/Stage Technician, Stage Manager



CX: When and how did you get started in the industry?

FM: I started working weekends at a guitar shop when I was fourteen, got offered the position of Guitar Tech on "Buddy" the musical in 1999 - Toured with it for two years.

CX: What does a typical day at work involve for you?

FM: A typical day at work for me involves:

1. Getting on site early and assessing stage and gig requirements eg. space on stage, backline equipment (hire and artist's personal gear) and time frame for setup and if applicable changeover plan (if at a festival or when multiple acts are sharing a stage and/or equipment)
-Forming a plan early is essential in order to make it work smoothly
2. Setting up equipment on stage as per Artist's spec
3. Monitoring soundcheck (sometimes actually doing the soundcheck if artist is not present) - this is a good time to get an idea of what problems may occur during show or changeover
4. Restrunging guitars, tuning drums and/or repairing anything that may be about to fail or is broken.
5. Monitoring the show, retuning and changing guitars/instruments for artist, repairing or solving problems on the fly (once the show starts there's no going back....)
6. Packing it all up and making sure it's going to get to the next gig safely and in order

CX: What kinds of venues do you find yourself working in?

FM: The range of venues varies all the time from small pubs/clubs, theatres, entertainment centres, stadiums, large outdoor festivals and corporate ballrooms/function centres. I can also sometimes be required at rehearsal venues.

CX: Do you work for a crewing agency or as a sole trader

FM: I am a sole trader primarily, occasionally contracted or supplied through production companies, backline hire companies and venues.

CX: What tools do you take to a gig?

FM: I am a bit of a "tool pig" compared to a lot of other guys in my trade. I will always take full a complement of screwdrivers, allen keys, pliers, restringing kit etc. I also take strobe tuners, cables, various types of tape, electronic testing/repair gear (soldering tools, multimeter) and usually a bunch of power supplies, guitar strings and a collection of weird and wonderful screws, nuts, bolts and miscellaneous spare parts.

It's always surprising how handy the odd bits end up being when you are at a gig in the middle of nowhere at midnight on a Sunday and something goes down.... The ability to solve a problem instantly goes a long way.

CX: What's the best part about your job?

FM: Watching amazing artists perform confidently and comfortably, and being able to solve problems quickly that would otherwise stop a show.

CX: Do you have a favourite band or artist you've worked with?

FM: I have worked with a whole bunch of artists over the years. Elvis Costello was very memorable - the consummate performer. I also worked for Diesel for quite a while, he's another very professional guy.

CX: What's your most memorable gig?

FM: Parklife Tour 2009 or maybe Grace Jones 2009 (Sydney Festival)

CX: What's the worst part about your job?

FM: Always being the first guy in the line of fire if something goes wrong (even if it's not my fault! This happens a lot - it's the "guitar tech's curse" quite often it's a psychological thing for the artist) and horrible late night venue load outs with lots of stairs

CX: How do people find you if they want to book you?

FM: People can reach me through Billy Hyde Stage Systems Sydney or via email - rockslidetech@yahoo.com



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WHAT-IF?

What If I have a multicore lighting cable with a shared earth?

The number of earth conductors required in a lighting multicore cable is a question that will get you 5 answers for every 4 people you ask, so let's see if we can't bust a few myths...

Firstly, there is no rule or regulation that states that you must have a separate earth per circuit, although this is by far the optimum arrangement and the one which requires the least amount of design work and carries the least risk.

Secondly, there is no rule or regulation that states that you must not share earths between circuits in a multicore cable, but as soon as you decide to do so, you take on the responsibility for the design of the earthing, and getting this wrong can lead to a significant risk of shock, cable damage or fire, that you will be unaware of until it is too late.

Providing a full sized earth conductor for every circuit in the multicore is always the optimal solution, but this has always entailed, until recently, sourcing expensive cables especially manufactured for the purpose.

A change to the Wiring Rules (AS/NZS 3000:2007, Clause 3.8.2 (c)) makes it permissible to sleeve active conductors in a multicore cable with a Green/Yellow sleeve and to use these conductors as earth conductors, so separate earths can be achieved

by using a multicore cable with 3 conductors per circuit, and sleeving to achieve the correct number of earths.

So, what if you are just stuck and you have to share earths?

Let's consider a 12 core + earth cable with 75o insulation, where all the conductors are 2.5mm² and we wish to use this cable for 6 x 10A circuits.

Check the current carrying capacity first by consulting AS/NZS 3008.1.1:2009.

Table 10, Column 6 gives us a single circuit rating of 25A. Table 22, Column 9 gives a de-rate factor of 0.57, for a de-rated current carrying capacity of 14.25A per circuit - all good here.

To determine the minimum acceptable size and quantity for shared earth conductors, we need to examine how the circuits are going to be arranged in use.

If they are permanently connected (hardwired) to a 3 phase supplied dimmer, with 2 circuits on each phase, then we can model this arrangement as a single 20A 3 phase circuit.

This 3 phase circuit has active conductors of 2 x 2.5mm². Adding these (5mm²) and rounding up to 6mm² (AS/NZS 3000:2007, Clause 5.3.3.1.2) we see the minimum

required earth conductor size for 6mm² active conductors (AS/NZS 3000:2007, Table 5.1) is 2.5mm² - a single shared 2.5mm² earth is OK.

If the circuits are patchable, then it would be possible to connect all 6 circuits to a single phase, so this arrangement needs to be modelled as single phase 60A circuit.

This single phase circuit has active conductors of 6 x 2.5mm². Adding these (15mm²) and rounding up to 16mm², we see the minimum required earth conductor size for 16mm² active conductors is 6mm² - a single shared 2.5mm² earth is not OK.

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.

α

By Andrew Matheison



Tech Training - moving forwards Continued...

Not Yet Competent threshold for each Unit - we were not allowed to 'grade' like they do in Uni. So a great student got the same rating as one who scraped through.

The good part is that all RTO's must give the students another go, something that does not happen at Uni where 51% is the pass rate otherwise you do the course - and pay - again.

The RTO VET student has stupendous rights of appeal and is entitled to more access and equity leeway than we could ever provide. In theory an illiterate and dyslectic student must be supported through the course, and allowed a reader, a scribe and extra time for everything. No college wants students to know all this.

We lived in fear of a wheel chair bound student insisting on enrolment, in which case we would have had to add a ramp, disabled toilet and elevator to the building - after endless council applications. When one day a dwarf arrived for a short course, we held out breath as she jumped up the stairs, one by one, positive and happy to deal with whatever we had. Thank you!

I'll always believe that we came as close as possible to highly effective industry training for our students, and I know the majority of graduates rightly deserve the success many have already found.

Industry Acceptance

Sadly we endured slings and arrows and took some hits when some graduates screwed up on the job. But the truth is in the numbers, because most students came to us from our recruitment efforts in schools and only a few from industry recommendation.

Government funded traineeships fell from 24 in 2007 to just 4 in 2010. It wasn't just us - James McAllan at National Technical Training in Queensland reports heavy employer resistance to funded traineeships. The national numbers are an embarrassment.

Industry support on the other hand was awesome - many firms loaned or donated equipment and sent experts to talk to the students.

A problem that needs action is the fear factor where existing workers without a qualification resent the kids who have one. I had students call me almost in tears after being bullied by industry guys (never girls) who would say words to the effect of: 'OK, smart arse, you have a Diploma, go get me a XYZ NOW!' Or abuse them because they could not operate a Grand MA - when specific console operation is not in the curriculum. Nor should it be.

Next Step

Regulation is coming, and you have to be prepared in advance.

The next five years will see a requirement that all workers carry an

industry specific OH&S qualification that needs to be developed by an organization that will actually engage with the industry. That rules out IBSA.

We need a specific qualification that covers off Induction, Work at Height, Show Risks, Electricity, Fatigue, and Legislation (including sound regulations).

With everyone (you, me him and her) carrying this qualification, we will then meet the demands of governments who will immediately require this just as soon as one of us makes an overdue mistake and drops a truss on an audience of kids.

Beyond the surely mandated OH&S qualification, actual industry technical training should not be consumed into the VET framework. Instead as an industry we should agree on the levels of proficiency required for each role and each task.

Transport workers and dangerous goods courses and tickets are mandatory if you want to work at an airport or drive a bus. They are not VET courses, nor should they be.

I think the industry, led by employers, must quickly engage first gear and get started on the OH&S qualification and ticket regime. What makes it infinitely harder is that there is no peak industry body pushing this. Now more than ever we need to reconstitute Showsafe.

α

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SYDNEYSIDERS SPEND A NEW YEAR'S DAY IN IBIZA



Camilo Franco plays to the masses

Space is one of the biggest nightclubs on Ibiza. It is one of the only places to feature an outdoor terrace area, where partygoers can dance the night and day away, interrupted only by the occasional jumbo flying overhead.

Current regulations require clubs to be closed for at least 2 out of every 24 hours, so for the other 22 hours it's a full tilt party.

So how do you bring this to Sydney?

Space Ibiza is a dance music festival, and was held in Moore Park's Entertainment Quarter on New Year's Day 2011. Set against a backdrop of the SCG, four stages spread out over a large area and provided punters ample choice for entertainment. The line-up included Carl Cox, Steve Lawler, Francois K, Sebastien Leger, and many other well-reputed DJs. The idea of the party was to replicate the vibe of a terrace party at the Space club on Ibiza.

The smallest two of the stages were located inside The Forum building, with the next largest being in the coach bay area immediately outside. Some distance behind this in the flight area was the main stage.

The first thing to strike you upon entering the festival was the scale of it - it's rather big.

There's something odd about walking into a day club event. It's got a different feeling to a nightclub - it's more relaxed and laid back. It feels more like a festival. At 30-something degrees outside the promoters definitely had the right weather for it. The gig commenced at midday, and from early on it was clear the punters were enjoying it. There was plenty of free space at all the outdoor stages - not for lack of punters but just because of the sheer scale of the festival's footprint. The proximity to the airport & flight paths added to the authenticity of the experience.

Some things the festival organizers did really well was to make sure there was adequate water for punters - and it was free. Security on the main stage had a misting hose, which was well received, as was the "misting tent" at the back of the flight area. Ticketing and entry also seemed well under control, with only a short queue to gain entry to the festival. The crowd appeared overall very well tempered too - it seemed everyone was just there to have a good time. Smiles all round. Alex Dimitroff, one of the promotions managers for the show explained to us that some 6 months of planning had gone into the day. A poignant reminder that adequate planning is a must to ensure a smooth gig.

Managing it all

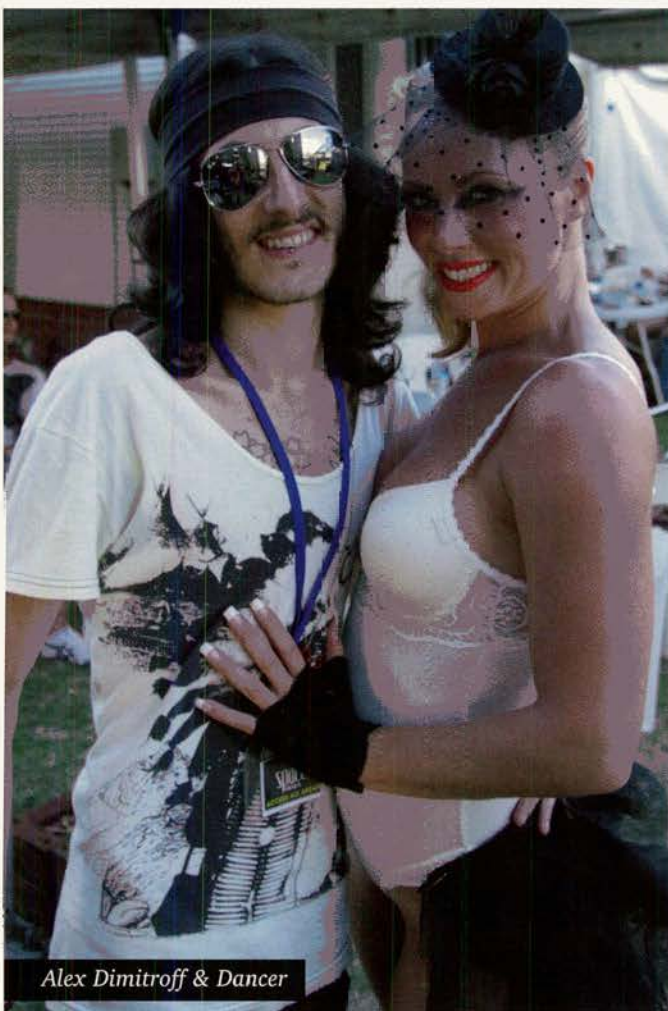
CX caught up with Joe Caruso, the production manager to find out more about production on the event. The primary suppliers were Norwest Productions for audio, and Chameleon Touring Systems for lighting & visuals. Joe describes his biggest challenge as having the right staff in place; making sure everyone's doing what they're meant to be doing and not getting distracted by other people having fun. Joe explained that the promoters of the party took over the brand last year and wanted to have a new fresh look. They described to Joe what happens in Space Ibiza using video as a tool to illustrate the concepts they desired for the Sydney event. Joe proposed designs for the two outdoor stages to the client, keeping in mind the available budget.

Big Space, Big PA

The flight area where the main stage was located is several hundred metres long, so to achieve a uniform sound level across this space some serious PA was required. We caught up with Scott Harrison, one of the Norwest Productions staff on-site to check out the PA spec.

Adamson speakers make up the whole FOH system, with 10x Y-Axis Y-18 plus 2x Y-Axis Y-10 per side. Low frequency extension was supplied by a centre cluster of 12x T21 subs, and 2x Y-Axis Y-10 cabs took care of in-fill at front centre. Processing for the Adamson system included XTA448 and 226 units, with a Dolby Lake front end. 4x Adamson M15 wedges supplied on-stage foldback for MCs and various other performers, while the

Continued Page 34 ----->



Alex Dimitroff & Dancer



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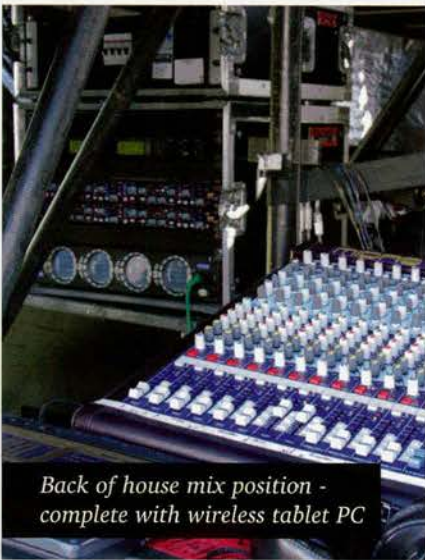


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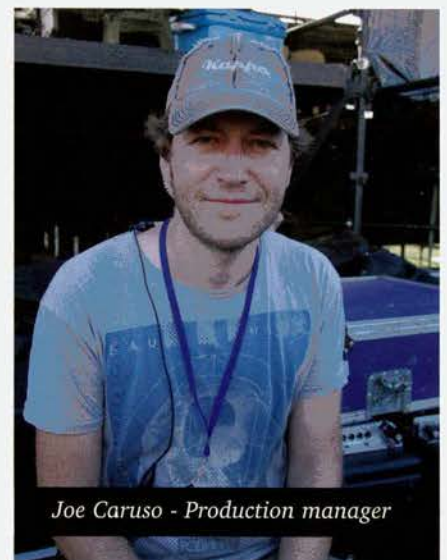




Back of house mix position - complete with wireless tablet PC

all important DJ monitoring was supplied by 2x EAW SB730 and 2x KF730 per side. Amplification was a mixture of Lab Gruppen FP6400 and FP10000Q units, and power was supplied via a 400A powerlock distro.

The front of house mix position was actually located under the USL corner of the stage, and accessed from the backstage area. A Midas Venice 160 was used, along with Shure UR series radio mics and a pair of C2 compressors to maintain control over DJ levels. A wireless tablet allowed changes to be made to the system from the FOH area. Hats off to the Norwest crew for the PA - overall level was well controlled and the whole system sounded good across the entire flight area, no small feat!

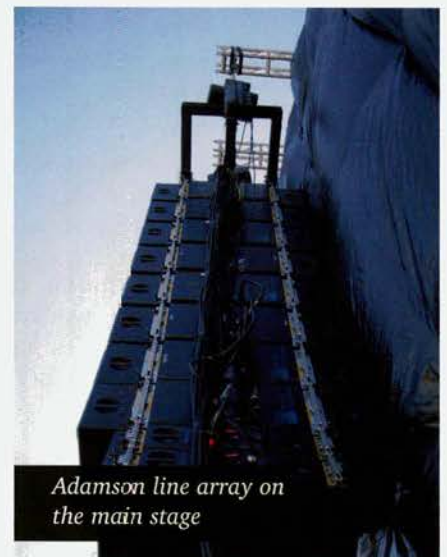


Joe Caruso - Production manager



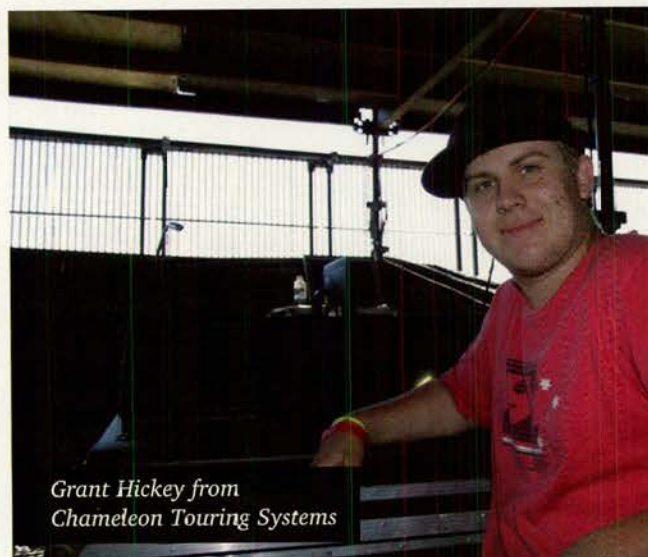
Scott Harrison from Norwest Productions

The coach bay used a smaller system yet still packed a wallop punch. 8x twin 18" subs, plus 6x EAW KF750 cabs per side were run from a combination of Crest CA12 and Lab Gruppen FP6400 amplifiers. An EAW UX8800 processor controlled the whole lot. DJ fill again was supplied by twin EAW SB730 and KF730 cabs per side, and processed on an XTA 226. A Yamaha 01V, Klark DN360 EQs and Shure UR series radio mics completed the system. The difference



Adamson line array on the main stage





Grant Hickey from
Chameleon Touring Systems




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-----> Continued From Page 33

between line array and conventional boxes was noticeable, with punters seeming to enjoy the audible hot spot immediately in front of the stage.

Light on for darkness

Ever fired up a moving light in broad daylight? I have - it's how I figure out if they're bright or not. But ultimately, the brightest moving light of all time is the sun. So how do you light a gig in broad daylight?

The decision was made to make the lighting effects for the show more visualization based - this would

yield value even in broad daylight, and look stunning once the sun sets. We found Grant Hickey - one of Chameleon Touring Systems crew out the back of the main stage, or more accurately in the back of the main stage. Up stage centre to be specific - seated comfortably behind his GrandMA 2 console, esky of cold water close at hand (a smart move on such a warm day). Finding LX ops on stage is something new, though he did have the video guys directly in front of him, and even when they were concealed behind a scrim and a video screen.

Grant welcomed us into the LX lounge long enough to give us the

LX spec: 52 Martin LC panels were used on the main stage, along with 10x Atomic strobes plus a handful of 4 lighters. Both audio and lighting were rigged the day prior to the show, and upon returning on show day some minor issues were encountered with condensation in fixtures, but this was all dutifully resolved prior to the show. Everything was running nice and smoothly when we arrived, leaving Grant and Co to wait for the bump-out at the end of the night.

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By Jimmy Den-Ouden

RIETRO

Review

We take a look at some modern classics - gear which has stood the test of time.

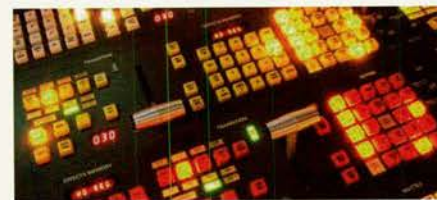


Shure SM58

Probably the most commonly recognised vocal mic in existence, the fundamental design of the SM58 has changed little since 1966. It has a distinctive look and feel, and while it's not necessarily everyone's first choice in vocal mics nobody could reasonably turn their nose up at being handed one.

The beauty of the SM58 lies in its popularity and predictability - being so widely known it's a mic which is available almost anywhere in the world, and wherever you are you can be assured that an SM58 will always sound the same. It's an easy mic to work with in terms of monitors, and incredibly robust to boot. Check out the Shure USA website to see how much punishment you can deal out to a mic and still have it work afterwards.

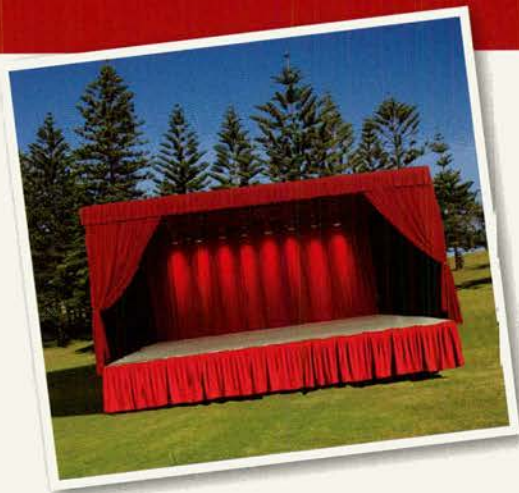
Probably the only real downside is that being so popular has led to a spate of cheap imitation SM58s being sold on the internet - they're poorly engineered replicas which sounds nothing like a real 58. Avoid the clones and buy from a reputable supplier - Jands is the Australian distributor for Shure.



Grass Valley Group Series 4000 Vision Switcher

Released in the late 80s, the GVG 4000 was an SDI video mixer. It had more auxiliary outputs than any other mixer at the time which was a key advantage. Its massive downfall lay in the sheer bulk and weight of the thing. The power supply alone checked in at around 80kg, and required 20A 3 phase to run. The unit refused to even start up unless the massive cooling fan tray was

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installed in the top of the frame - principally because the mixer would have cooked without it. The control panel for the 4000 bore a striking resemblance to the Death Star control panel as seen in Star Wars. A very striking resemblance.



Yamaha SPX

Again, a universally recognised device. Back in 1987 you could buy an SPX90 brand new. Probably the most common effects processor specified on touring riders - it doesn't seem to matter how complex the FOH console or rack is, the SPX invariably makes an appearance somewhere in the request list.

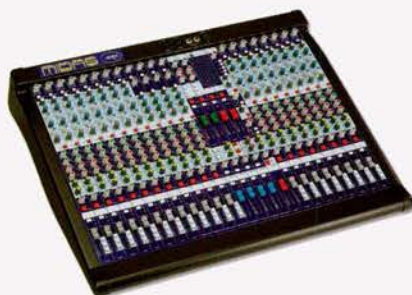
Maybe it's because people know how to work it. There are tons of effect processors which do everything under the sun, but it takes a long time to achieve the desired result when using these. The SPX is fast, and whether you're dealing with a 90, 900 or 990 they all operate in much the same way (plus or minus the odd rotary encoder). On occasion I've seen touring engineers spec some fancy processor into a rig, then subsequently had them ask me to explain how to work it. I've never been asked how an SPX works. It does a lot and fits inside one rack unit, plus XLR and TRS inputs and outputs make it more versatile when patching.



Clay Paky Golden Scan

The milestone moving mirror fixture - the Golden Scan was a definitive product which then paved the way for High End's Intellibeam fixture. Accusations flew about that High End

may have "borrowed" certain Golden Scan concepts. The Golden Scan was the first fixture which got lighties interested in moving lights other than Vari*Lite. It had a 575W HMI lamp, colour and gobo wheels and ran on not very many DMX channels. It also weighed a lot because it was built well. Golden Scan III units are still in use today.



Midas Venice

The baby of the Midas family, the Venice hasn't been around so long as some other Midas consoles, but it's gained popularity as a workhorse. It's the kind of console you can put into a venue, spill beer all over for a year, and know that at least some of it will still work afterwards. Probably. I'm not encouraging you to spill beer all over your Midas. Finding a release date for the Venice is tough, but we do know it's now discontinued having been replaced with the Venice F series.

Simple but effective, it's got a good basic set of features - 4 subgroups, 6 auxiliaries of which 2 are pre-fade, 2 are post and the remainder are switchable. Novice operators can understand it, which makes it a good desk for walk-ins. The EQ on the Venice is basic - 4 band with 2 semi-parametrics. The high pass filter is fixed frequency though still usable, but those damn rear-panel mount phantom power switches are and always will be a pain in the arse. The dual phantom power LEDs (one on the channel strip and another next to each XLR input) on the other hand are definitely one of the best ideas any manufacturer has ever had in the history of time as we know it.

Some people find the short throw faders annoying, personally it's never bothered me. There has to be some kind of catch - after all it's under \$10k and has Midas written on the front.

Leitch SPG-141

Analogue video relies on a reference video signal, and this originates from a synd pulse generator. Still running 20 years on, you could find at least one of these blue boxes in just about every OB truck in the country (more commonly 2, one was redundant). Before framestores existed in any significant way, getting an outside broadcast feed synchronised to a station was difficult. Leitch made a companion product which allowed the 140 to be timed to a station via phone line!

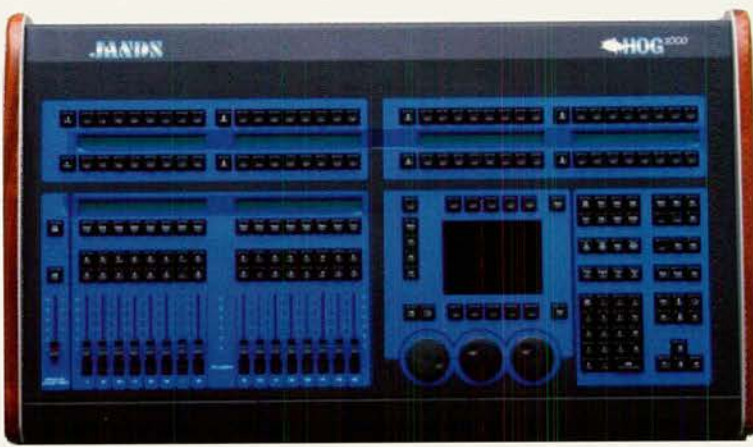


DBX 160X

"The ultimate drum compressor" - while the 160X is not the only compressor on the market which could claim this, it is one of them. Reality is that you can use it on more than just drums. It was simple - threshold, ratio, and makeup gain pots plus the "over-easy" button were the only controls you needed to worry about. Attack and release times are a bit vague and nebulous, but whatever they are it seems to work. I like it on vocals, horns, bass, and some other things.

One of my mates reckons the 160X is a bit brutal, others think it's smooth, and ultimately it seems to be one of those units which you get what you want from - even if it's something different to the next guy. Commonly lurking about in-house system racks throughout the country, occasionally even as main system compressors it's not rare to run into these. The newer 160A looks the same and notionally works the same way, but plenty of folk will tell you there's a difference. They may be right.

Second hand, an original 160X will set you back around \$500 on-line assuming you can find one. If you can find a pair of units you can stereo link them using a TRS cable and slave one to the other which links the RMS detectors in both units to maintain correct stereo imaging. The badly scanned user manual is still available for download and contains a lot of information which is still relevant today.



JANDS Hog 1000

Long since discontinued, the JANDS Hog 1000 started life as the Evert 416 - at least in form factor. It rode loyally atop the "second generation" wave of moving light consoles, and is still widely in use today. So maybe it doesn't do pixel mapping and other fancy stuff. It might look a little lean on features when compared to today's generation of consoles - but then it doesn't cost \$50K either - it never did. Let's not forget either that when the Hog was in its heyday it was uncommon for any fixture to require more than about 26 DMX channels for control. With 2 DMX universe outputs the Hog was more than geared up to accommodate the then available fixtures.

Originally retailing around the \$26K mark, the tail end of production saw new Hog 1000 consoles up for sale at around \$9000 including a case. You'd probably pick one up for around \$6000 second hand now, though the backlights on the LCD displays will likely need replacement. With a little effort, a text editor and USB disk drive you can write and install library files to suit newly released fixtures, though if you check out the support sites you may well find someone else has already beat you to it. Remember 3.5" floppy disks? The Hog 1000 still uses these.



Yamaha PM4000

It weighs around 400kg when cased. It takes about an hour to properly neutralise all the controls. The PM4000 has always been an imposing beast, and in the modern age it still is. So why, nearly 2 decades on are people still using them? Why does a second hand PM still fetch in the order of \$10k? Because they worked then, and they work now.

Balanced insert points, stereo matrix outputs, lots of group and auxiliary outputs as well as VCAs and mute automation made it a realistic choice for big concert mixing. One of my mates used to use one as a ccmms mixer just because it had so many mix busses.

While the PM4000 is not necessarily beer proof, I've heard tales of several which have been through floods and such and made it out to tell the story. The modular construction of the PM4000 makes servicing it a viable option - and let's face it, once you have invested in such a large console you don't want to be throwing it away the first time something goes wrong with it. The dual power supply linking and switchover option makes the console more reliable than units without this.



Sony BVP-500 / 550 Camera chain

Claiming a massive chunk of the world camera market in the late 90s (we've heard 70%), the BVP-500 (studio version) and BVP-550 (portable version) camera was definitely a market leader. Camera rather than cameras because it was the same thing in a different box depending on which model you chose. Coupled up to the Sony CCU-550 via triax cable, its SDI output made it a logical choice for SD digital facilities. Still supported and still in widespread use a decade on, it definitely has the legs to claim "classic" status.



Urei 1178

So old it doesn't even have XLR connectors, only a set of balanced screw terminals. The Urei 1178 is probably one of the most desired dynamics processors of the 80s - it out-specced the dbx 160. Yet now you tend to find them in studios rather than live situations. Maybe because they don't travel well? I once watched a mate service his 1178 while standing on top of his audio desk - poking and prodding away with the soldering iron. Dry joints aptly led him to do this.

If you own one you've probably had the caps replaced by now, if not the person you bought it from did. Kind of like a 1960's Mustang, there's something worthy about the 1178 but it does need maintenance. It's not as fast as modern compressors, and again different people have different ideas about its appeal - some say it's transparent while others claim brutality. You can push all 4 ratio buttons in simultaneously and this does something too - even the plug-in gives you this feature (Shift+Click). And yes, I know the plug-in doesn't sound the same.

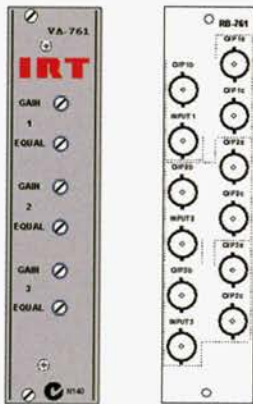
Strand Patt 23

This 'vintage Strand spotlight' just pulled \$201 on eBay, no lamp included. Actually a Patt 23 MK II with PTFE cable, this was the mainstay of small theatre lighting in the UK and Australia between 1950 and 1976. Originally a 500w incandescent 'T1' lamp, this Mark II version allowed a tungsten halogen lamp. It was fixed at 30 degrees output dispersion, despite Strand publishing 20 degrees. This confused a whole generation of lighties.



Lexicon Prime Time

The Lexicon Prime Time was sent to challenge us with its analogue delay and modulation effects. The M93 Prime Time, had 256 ms of memory and passed frequencies up to 12kHz. But the bandwidth drops as time lengthens. Confusing controls, unfathomable owners manual and balanced in with unbalanced out meant the now nameless designer was cursed more than once. But it looked Star Wars, so we all had one.



IRT Video Frame & Card System

This modular card based system allowed you to build multiple video processors into a 3RU frame. The biggest selling card was 3x3 video DA - you could split component video 3 ways using only 1 card slot rather than the more conventional 3 slots. Space efficient, this and optional dual redundant power supplies made the IRT frame a leader. It still is.



Australian Monitor AM1600

Back in the late 1980s, some crazed fellow decided to build the greatest power amplifier ever. Or at least the heaviest. Built out of custom extrusions the real heavy thing is the monster toroidal transformer. At 32kg, the AM1600 is still a contender for the title, and despite modern lightweight amps being available the humble AM1600 is still in use today. Perhaps because it's nigh on impossible to kill it? The only repair I've ever had to make on an AM1600 is replacing rail fuses, which failed due to age fatigue and not an actual electrical fault.

It looked good too, the slanty VU meters which flattened out when the amp produced its peak output - 470W per channel into 8 ohms with both channels driven. Or 2200W when bridged into 4 ohms. It was one of the early heavy hitters back in a time when 500W constituted a lot of power.

Still in use today, though more commonly in installed situations the AM1600 is gutsy enough to drive modern wedges with a real sense of purpose. For the users out there still using dual 15" composite boxes and subs, the AM1600 is a stalwart of daily operations. Little wonder this Australian designed and built product made it to the international market.



Altman Leko

Launched who knows when, seen first in the late 1970's and still made

today! The axial ellipsoidal, aka 1000w profile spot best known as a 'Leko' gives you great output and crap lamp life. Originally came in 110v only, so we used them in series like Par cans. Then came a 220/240v lamp with two filaments run in series. One would sag into the other and the lamp would fail without prior notice. Cheap as chips, came in different lens tube lengths thus different fixed beam outputs.



Yamaha 1027 EQ

Yamaha's 1027 third-octave equalizer set the scene in high class PA outboard racks in the late 1970's. The Alps faders have stainless steel rails front and back, which made them repairable. At 8 kilo's, it was heavy. The attenuator only cut gain, there was no boost. And to prove how long ago this was made, the XLR connector was called a 'Cannon Plug' in the manual.



Sony DVW500 DigiBetacam VTR

Before HDCAM achieved its recent popularity, there was Digital Betacam. And there was the Sony DVW500, which until quite recently was the only DigiBetacam recorder Sony made. This meant they were everywhere. Every post production facility, every OB truck, every playout centre. EVERYWHERE. Pretty impressive market penetration for a box which retailed at over \$50K.

The DVW500A was equipped with analogue heads as well, which allowed it to playback BetacamSP tapes as well as Digi Betacam - a nice little addition which allowed the DVW500A to take place of a common predecessor the BVW-75 BetacamSP VTR. As with all Sony Professional VTRs, the DVW500 can be externally controlled in a number of ways by way of the Sony 9pin control protocol.



Fostex 6301B

The mainstay of broadcast field and comms monitoring, the 6301B (or 6301BX if you want to buy a unit with the XLR input already installed - most people just add their own) is one of those things which hit the nail square on the head from day one. It's compact and simple, and does exactly what it needs to. It's still a current product on the Fostex website and clearly this is because there's still a market for them. Apparently they do well in the ham radio arena too?

Most every audio assistant in the game will know what is meant when someone asks for "a Fostex" (or even "Fozzie") in the industry. The 6301B makes an ideal floor monitor because it's compact yet loud for its size, despite only being rated to 10W. It draws bigger all power and has a volume pot on the front, so you can turn it down if it annoys you. Commonly you'll see the 6301B with its front grill caved in - this is because despite the rigours of daily abuse it takes more than a few knocks to keep it down.



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NEUTRIK



Beyerdynamic DT108/109

What the Germans may seem to lack in humour they make up for in designing and building things right the first time around. The DT108 (single sided) and DT109 (dual sided) headsets have been around seemingly forever, and in all that time the design is still pretty much the same as when it was first made.

Found in venues, production company hire inventories and OB trucks everywhere these Beyer headsets can be used with ClearCom panels, RTS partyline beltpack systems, Sony cameras, and indeed prettymuch anything with a 4pin XLR headset socket. Or a 5pin if you change the plug. The modular design of these headsets combined with the continued availability of every possible spare part you could need is the reason the DT108 and DT109 are still in use today. Even when they get busted, they stubbornly enough, still kind of work regardless. If you're ever looking for one, head to the followspot booth.



Manfrotto magic arm

Perhaps the ultimate in rigging. It's got Manfrotto written on it, so you know it isn't going to be cheap - but then again nor should it. It works. The "magic arm" is a

triple articulated bracket which can bend, spin and pivot in every way imaginable. Once you get it into position, twist the spring loaded locking arm and all the joints become rigid. Earlier versions had a knob to tighten rather than the spring loaded arm.

In conjunction with Manfrotto magic clamps and spiggots, you can build just about anything using magic arms. I once draped a whole room using just some autopoles and a couple of magic arms. Oh, and some drapes too. Best effort I've seen is 5 magic arms used to cantilever a PTX camera off the side of a portable stage - perhaps the most expensive camera bracket in history, at least for the size of camera it held!



Lexicon PCM60

Possibly the simplest reverb ever made, the PCM60 was one of the very early digital reverb units. The

owners manual dates at 1984. The PCM60 only does one thing, which may account for why it does it so well. It features a staggering 2 reverb algorithms - room and plate. Program "recall" is by way of interlocking mechanical switches just like the ones on your old T.V. Clunk clunk. Reverb time and room size have 4 variations each - Short to Long and Small to Large. To get a decent sound out of it basically you just need to plug the thing in.

One of my mates reckons it's got drum reverb written all over it, and indeed it works just as well on drums as on vocals or even a horn section. It's a good generic reverb. There are low and high frequency shaping filters for those who want to colour things up a bit. I've even heard of a guy who uses a PCM60 as a vocal channel insert but sets the mix to dry - he just likes what happens to sound when it passes through the device.

You'd be lucky to find a new PCM60 anywhere since they were discontinued a long time ago, though they do crop up on-line from time to time and seem to fetch about \$800.



REPAIR NETWORK

Keeping these old treasures up and running can sometimes be something of a challenge. These people can help:

Howard Jones, Studio Solutions (Sydney) NW. service@stusol.com

David Leigh, Logitronics Pty Ltd, Northcote (Melbourne), Vic, davel@logitronics.com.au

Grant Ettrick, Ettrick Audio Visual, Morley (Perth), WA, grant@eav.com.au

John Farkas, Pro Audio (Mesa Boogie and Motion Sound), Canberra, ACT, john@proaudio.com.au

Martin Holmes, Logitronics Pty Ltd, Northcote (Melbourne), Vic, martinh@logitronics.com.au

Mike Diack, Mt Eden (Auckland), New Zealand, moby@kcbbs.gen.nz

Kevin Quigley, Quigley Professional Electronics, Prospect Vale (Launceston), Tasmania, qpetas@bigpond.net.au

Rob Squire, Pro Harmonic Technical Services, Forestville (Adelaide), SA, rob@proharmonic.com

Warren Huck, Hux Electronics, Mitchelton (Brisbane), Qld, warren@hux.com.au

Warren McAlister, Phase Engineering, Sydney, NSW, warren@phaseng.com.au

TRIPOD OVERLOAD

If you have gone out and purchased a new "prosumer grade video camera and want to make the most of it, you should consider purchasing a good tripod to complement it.

The cost of a tripod can vary from a few hundred dollars to several thousand, but cost is not necessarily the only thing you should consider when making your purchase.

As the newer generation of cameras becomes heavier and has more attachments, the load on a tripod is getting greater. Potential additions include super long life batteries, a 7" monitor to mount on the top, LED camera lights and microphones. This is in addition to the weight of the camera itself, and sometimes well beyond. So suddenly that \$400.00 tripod that was rated to hold 2.5kgs, could in fact be holding up to 6 or 7 kg. Where you notice the tripod struggling is in the friction of the pan and tilt. When a camera is weighted correctly for a tripod, you should be able to add a little friction to the tripod and be able to pan around the room at a constant speed without jerks. This also relates to tilt. A well adjusted tripod should enable you to follow someone walking and talking from a distance of 12 metres fluidly without a jerk.

The other thing many people don't do properly is balance the camera on a tripod. Two items are generally required to attach the camera - a baseplate (specific to the camera) and a wedgeplate (specific to the tripod). How these two items are attached to each other (or rather how far forward or backward) controls how the camera balances. The baseplate has slidable threads, or many holes to accommodate different balance points. Even something as simple as changing lenses can affect balance.

You can tell if the camera is correctly balanced when you loosen off all the friction knobs on the tripod head and then tilt the camera down (eg pointing towards the ground at 40 degrees) If it is balanced well it should stay in that position without drifting lower. Some of the more professional tripods are tension balanced and will return to the centre (90 degrees) slowly. Repeat this for a tilt up. Make sure the camera does not want to fall backward.

The other item most people forget is a spreader. Spreaders are either internal or attach to the feet of the tripod. The feet mounted spreaders are usually made from rubber. The spreader has a number of very good uses. Firstly, it stops the tripod from sliding around. If someone accidentally kicks one of the legs of the tripod, the whole thing can topple over and smash your good camera. The spreader adds some weight to stabilize the tripod, which helps when you are panning fast, or you are in a public area. It also reduces vibration of tripods that are very light.

SO WHEN YOU'RE OUT BUYING A TRIPOD CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:



- The total weight of the camera and all accessories that you could put on in the future, then add about 2kgs to that weight. This is the total payload you are looking to support. Most good tripods have a maximum payload stated
- Make sure your tripod has a 'spreader' (extendable base onto which the legs mount)
- Rubber feet
- A protective bag
- A second pan arm if you have zoom and focus servos

Below Left: Tripod with spreader
Below Right: Overload! This tripod is designed for a much smaller, lighter camera!

α



VOIP AND SKYPE

Les Bishop takes a look at one way to bring live video feeds into a venue on a tight budget

You see it every day on the news. When a story breaks, a reporter is on site and the news anchor chats live with them. This technology is fantastic, but expensive. The use of satellites and tech crews to make this happen every day runs into the millions each year.

If you remember back a few years ago, when war broke out, people were using video phones to do live crosses and report from events. The quality was not as good, but the message got across.

More and more people in the corporate and media industries would like to have this technology, but find the cost prohibitive. Now with competitive costs of laptops and internet access, there are new ways of creating this live environment without the costs.

On a recent production event, a small community group wanted to interview a producer of an independent movie in front of a live studio audience. This sounds simple, but the producer was in Canada. The simplest way of doing this was just to use a phone line and a hybrid (a device which allows you to bring balanced line level audio into and out of a phone line). But this is not visually interesting and would have struggled to maintain an audience's interest for 90 minutes.

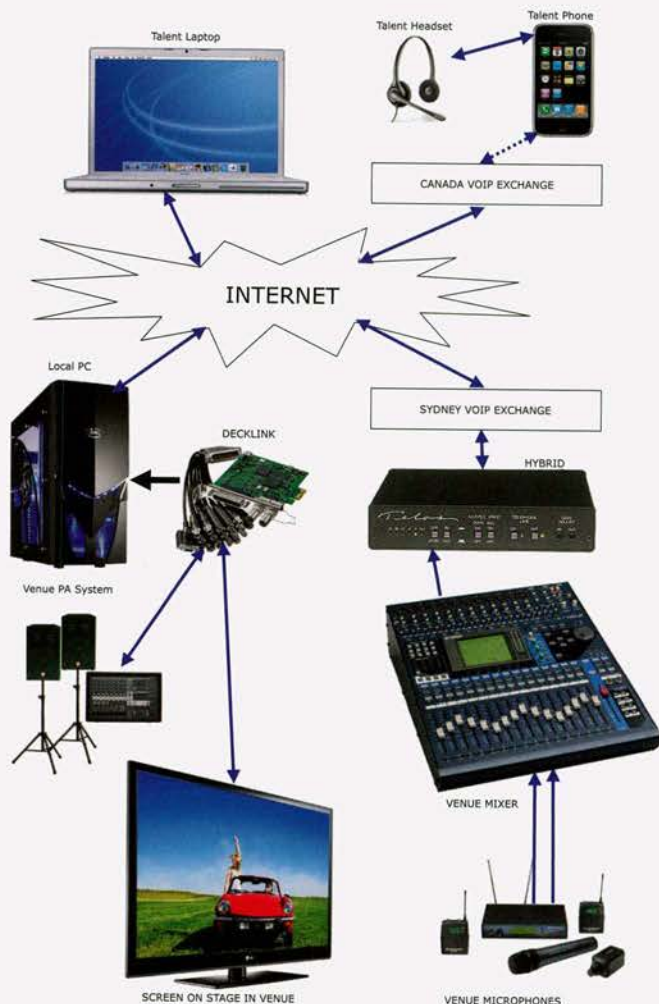
The project team was put together to work out how they could do better. They came up with the concept of using VOIP and Skype together to make this happen. The issues were that the venue did not have Internet connection, but they did have a phone line. So how did they enhance this?

Low cost video

Firstly, they got a computer that had a USB broadband modem on it. They installed SKYPE on the computer. They also found the producer in Canada had a Macbook Pro with inbuilt web camera. They arranged for the producer to install Skype on his computer as well, thus allowing a Skype to Skype video conference.

The team installed into their computer a Decklink video card which produces a composite video output. This was fed to a 42" LCD monitor on stage, enabling the audience to see the producer. The audio output of the computer was fed into the PA system in the venue so the punters could hear what he had to say. So the video and audio link from Canada was complete. Now to get sound back there...

This is where it gets a little more complicated. If you were to send the PA audio back to the talent, he would hear himself back on delay which is very annoying. So they generated a "mix minus" feed back to him using an AUX send on the audio desk (including only the mics from the people on-stage, plus an audience mic). This gave the producer a direct feed of the room mics only, allowing him to hear the questions. Sending this mix-minus over a VOIP line was decided to be the most affordable option for the client.



Low cost audio

As there was no Internet connection in the venue, the tech crew came up with the idea of using VOIP calling cards. They headed to the local convenience store and purchased a \$10.00 calling card of a reputable company. They dialed a local number and went through the VOIP PABX to dial a mobile iPhone in Canada. The talent put on a set of earphones and could now hear the venue clearly.

Here's the trick to make it all work cheaply. To dial a mobile in Canada on a Telstra line, it costs \$2.03 per minute approx. The interview went for 90 minutes and set up time and testing for another 30 minutes. This alone would have cost around \$240.

Using the calling card and a local call came up with a much different figure.

Time Used	120mins
Calling Card	\$10
Local Call	\$0.30
Calling Card Levy	\$1.20
Call Cost	\$7.20
TOTAL	\$18.70

Pretty impressive, 2 hours to a mobile phone in Canada for \$18.70

Here's another interesting piece of information, for 2 hours of Skype (which is free) video calling, only 912meg of download was used on the broadband USB modem. There was no break up, no stopping, no jitter of pictures. Pretty impressive.

What's the catch?

Be warned though, there is one cost that does not appear in here. To make this work and work well, there was a senior audio engineer and a broadcast tech setting all this up. Being smart in some areas saves heaps of costs, but only works if you have a great crew to work with, and you fully understand the technology.

Another important point to consider is this: the Macbook Pro has a 4:3 camera in it. If you are using a 16:9 or wide screen monitor, you will need to ARC (aspect ratio convert) the signal to ensure correct aspect - otherwise the talent will look stretched (i.e.: fat). Nobody likes that.

Using an external 16:9 camera is another option, but given that this will need to be set up in the remote location (in this case Canada), it relies far more heavily on the talent to do technical stuff. A less stressful option is to put the stage monitor into 4:3 aspect.

Summary of equipment used:

Sydney Venue End

- 1 x Computer with Skype installed, equipped with Decklink card for composite video output
- 1 x 42" LCD Monitor
- 1 x Phone hybrid
- 1 x Phone handset
- 1 x Analogue phone line
- 1 x Audio console with 2 auxilliary busses
- 1 x Calling card
- 1 x PA system
- 1 x Internet connection (wireless broadband)

Canadian End

- 1 x Macbook Pro with webcam, microphone, and Skype installed
- 1 x iPhone with earpiece
- 1 x Internet connection



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SENNHEISER MK 4 LARGE DIAPHRAGM RECORDING MICROPHONE

A very new direction for Sennheiser

By Jimmy Den-Ouden

The Sennheiser company has a considerable heritage in microphones, and their mics have always been built to last. I'm still using my old pair of MD421s, and the only failure I've ever experienced is the mic clip breaking (but really, who hasn't experienced that?). Built in Germany, the MK 4 represents a new direction for Sennheiser, both in what it is and the market sector it hits.

The MK 4 arrived on my desk along with an instruction: "Don't pull it apart, there are only 2 of them in the country". A quick google search revealed nothing official from Sennheiser, but a lot of websites indicating the MK 4 will be officially launched at the Winter NAMM show 2011 in Anaheim. It's Sennheiser's first ever large diaphragm condenser mic, and just quietly I think it's a bit of a winner.

Hands on

There's nothing like getting your grubby little hands onto a brand new piece of kit. This one was especially exciting. Packaged in typical Sennheiser style, it arrived with an included mic clip and soft drawstring storage bag. The XLR connector at the base of the mic has a threaded surround which mates with the clip. The clip is plastic with a metal locking collar. While plastic clips have in the past had their failings, the modern generation of plastics has all but eliminated this.

The mic itself doesn't look very Sennheiser in its styling, but then what is a thing that never existed supposed to look like once it finally materializes? It looks cool anyhow - the full metal casing with a matte finish shouldn't show up too many of those greasy fingerprints. The optional windsock fits snugly and



installs with ease.

So how does Sennheiser's first large diaphragm mic actually sound? It sounds awesome. Frequency response is smooth - the spec shows it as largely flat between 50Hz and 2kHz, with a little kick upward around the 5kHz - 10kHz area. At 20Hz it's about 8db down. So while it doesn't go super-duper low, it goes down as far as it needs to in order to be useful in all but the most extreme or experimental of applications. There's no nasally barkiness to it, the

MK 4 just sounds sweet.

The cardioid pattern exhibits a smooth roll-off from on-axis, right through to a massive null directly behind. This means it's incredibly important to orient the mic correctly, otherwise you'll get more ambient than direct pickup. The mic is side-address, with the curved face being the front. Rated maximum SPL is 140db, which means you can put it in some pretty noisy situations without killing it. The windsock knocks around 10db off the

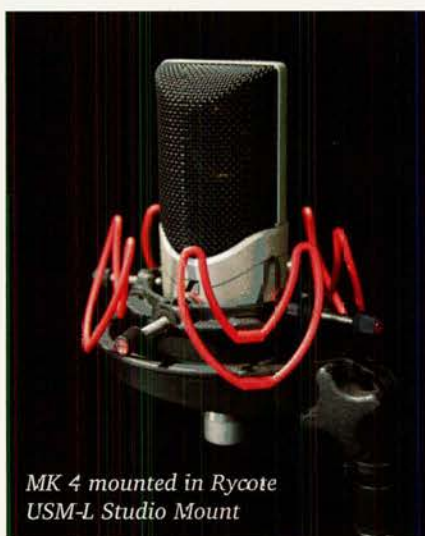
sensitivity with little impact on the frequency response.

Transient response is good, and while I didn't pull it to pieces to check I'm pretty certain there's some serious internal suspension on the mic element. I put it up on a stand then tramped all about the wooden floor around it and while I heard a lot of footsteps, I didn't hear a lot of rumble transferred through the stand into the capsule. Handling noise is far less of an issue than I expected it to be - I'd call it inconsequentially low. I'd also say the same of the noisefloor of the mic - I didn't notice it even with some pretty high gain applied.

The verdict

The MK 4 is touted as a recording mic - it says so on the box. While it's got definite potential as a staple for any recording studio, I reckon it would make a great live mic too. I can think of many applications where it would work, the lack of LF roll-off and pad switches perhaps being its one impediment in this. Ultimately, I like the MK 4. A lot. The aggressive pricing only adds to its appeal.

α



MK 4 mounted in Rycote USM-L Studio Mount



And with windsock!

What and Where

Brand: Sennheiser

Model: MK 4

RRP: \$499 inc GST

Product Info:

<http://sennheiser.com>

Distributor:

<http://syntec.com.au>

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ROBE 3000DT DIGITAL SPOT

Some time ago we looked at the 5000DT - now we welcome to the family its kid brother.

By Jimmy Den-Ouden

There used to be a line between lighting and video that was clearly defined. Nowadays it's more complicated, but just to play it safe the 3000DT Digital Spot from Robe has one foot either side of said line. It's trying to be everything to everyone, and for the most part succeeding.

The 3000DT is several devices all rolled into a relatively compact 28kg package. It arrives in a typically Robe over-engineered roadcase, and the cleverness starts here. The cases have a removable side, and once this is removed two cases can be paired together. You wouldn't lift it single handedly, but it would save space in the truck if you have a tailgate lifter. Removing the unit from the case it feels pretty solid. There are transit locks for pan and tilt, both of which you'll want to release before powering the fixture up - it makes some seriously angry noises if you forget.

Picture Right: Robe 3000DT



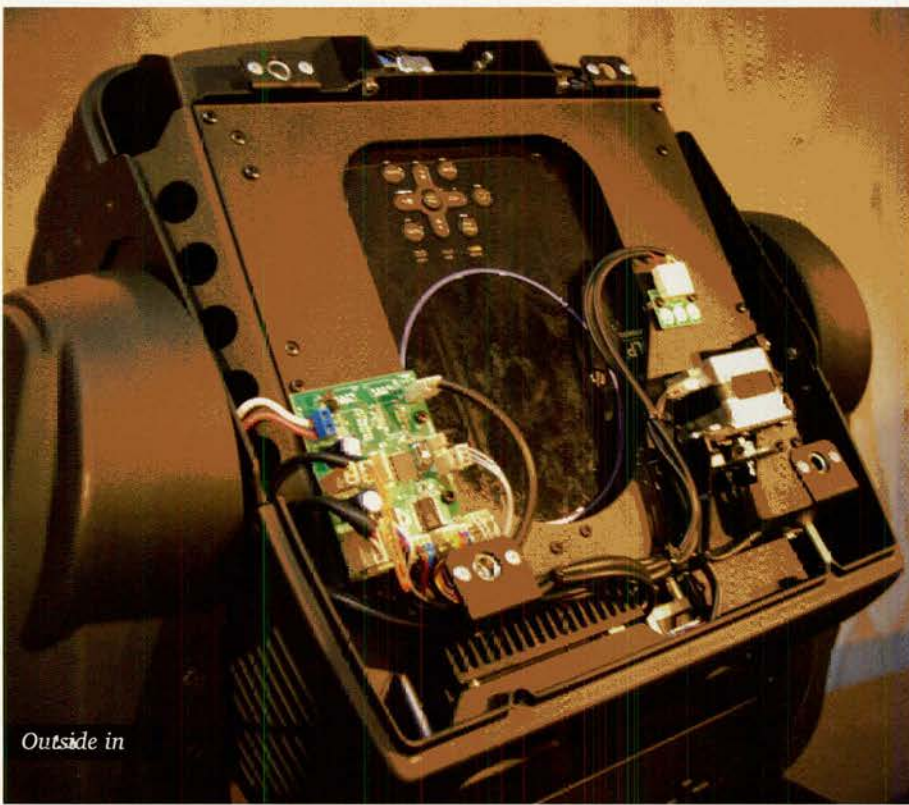
From the ground up

The base of the fixture houses a Linux based graphic engine which operates on Core2 Duo 3GHz hardware with 1GB of RAM, 160GB Hard drive and nVidia 9500 GT graphics card. The graphic engine supports up to 60,000 videos and gobos across all 3 gobo layers. Layers individually support transparency, sizing, positioning as well as 2 effects engines each. There's some serious video grunt, which means the best way to control this is probably using the ArtNet connection, which then supports media thumbnails being sent back to whatever controller you have connected. You can upload media into the server in a variety of image formats, as well as MPEG1 and MPEG2 video.

The media server output routes to the fixture head which contains a BenQ MP624 DLP projector, sporting a 2000:1 contrast ratio and 2700 ANSI Lumen output. Native aspect ratio is 4:3 at 1024x768 resolution. Rated lamp life is 3000 hours, or 4000 in economy mode. There's a mechanical shutter which can completely block the output of the projector, and is one of the parameters you need to adjust when programming. Adjacent to the projector lens is a Robe REDWash module containing 48 RGBW Luxeon Rebel LEDs. The REDWash module beam angle is 25 degrees

Somehow the 3000DT seems to integrate to become more than the sum of its parts. For instance, the graphic engine supports edge

blending so if you have multiple units you can merge the picture edges together then spread a projected image across multiple projectors. It takes a bit of time to setup, but the effect is good and even across strangely shaped surfaces appears quite seamless. The keystone capability is scary good too. The important thing to emphasize is that because the fixture can do so much, it takes longer to program. Not because the interface is overly clunky, there are just a lot of parameters that need to be addressed. A half-baked programming effort is likely to be quite obvious. This also means that the fixture benefits from being driven by a current console (whatever the brand, you rely heavily the fixture library).



Outside in

Fine physique

The fixture has composite & S-video inputs and outputs, so you can not only take the output of the graphic engine, but also feed in an external video source. DMX is on both 3 and 5 pin XLR connectors, with ArtNet on an EtherCon. Movement range is 540 degree pan and 280 degree tilt, and it's really accurate. The position recall was nice and precise - important when doing video blends. There's a 5" TFT LCD display on the base with the Robe Navigation System wheel for setup functions, of which there are many. It takes a few minutes to start up the graphic engine, but that's not really surprising since it's essentially a computer booting up.

The bottom line on the 3000DT is that it's very clever and while individually it's quite capable, it would really come into its own when used in great numbers. With adequate time to program you can achieve some spectacular effects with the unit.



Inputs and outputs a plenty

What and Where

Brand: Robe

Model: 3000DT Digital Spot

RRP: \$22,418.00 inc GST

Product Info:

<http://robedigital.com>

Distributor:

<http://ula.com.au>



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SOUNDCRAFT VI1 DIGITAL MIXING CONSOLE

Now with I/O onboard, the Vi1 is the smallest console in the Vi series



By Jimmy Den-Ouden

The Vi series consoles have gained popularity within the market - perhaps it's the Vistonics interface people like, perhaps it's just because they sound good. Even my dinosauric mate who's been a soundie for 30 years likes them. So why change a winning recipe?

Soundcraft haven't actually changed the recipe - just made the serving a little smaller. The Vi1 is just on a metre wide, which makes it compact enough to fit into theatre situations where space is at a premium. Equally it would be at home in monitor world on a stage. Despite being compact the control surface doesn't feel crowded. The Vistonics interface is in widescreen

format, which means 2 rows of 16 rotary encoders are embedded within the touchscreen. 16 channel faders, 8 output faders and 2 master faders fill the surface. It doesn't feel complicated either, which is a good thing.

The Vi1 includes 32 onboard mic preamps, as well as 4 AES and 2 SP/DIF inputs. Plenty of local I/O negates the need for a stage rack, so the console can quite easily drop in as a replacement to an analogue board. Should you need more I/O, or want a digital multicore option, use one of the Studer D21m card slots to add a MADI card. The console has 64 mix channels, to which any of up to 110 inputs can be routed from the control surface. The 24 mix busses plus LCR busses all have dedicated outputs on the back of the console, plus there are two sets of monitor outputs as well. This, along

with features like dual inputs for each channel make the console a realistic contender in the broadcast industry as well as live production. Running at 48kHz, latency from mic input to line output is <2ms, and the console can be clocked to a variety of external sources.

Internal effects are by Lexicon and 4 engines provide a choice of 14 reverbs, 7 delays plus some other effects. Graphic EQs are by BSS, so not only does this add value to the console, but also a fair measure of predictability. Always nice. HiQnet compatibility means snapshots within the console can trigger other events on the network - even changes within amplifiers for example. I'm not certain how useful this is, but it's nice to see that even though the size of the console has been reduced the feature set is still comprehensive.

Using it

Plug it in, switch it on and wait for the console to boot up. Boot up time isn't the world's fastest, but it's within acceptable limits. Our test console came equipped with a second power supply, which is an option worthy of consideration. A side note on reliability is that given the console draws about 100W when operating, hanging one power supply off an external UPS would be a good way to provide some extra redundancy, as would sourcing power from 2

different phases.

When testing the console I opted for the "no manual" approach to see how hard it was to figure out. Basic operations like channel modifications (eq, dynamics, HPF/LPF, and routing) were all very straightforward. The Vistonics interface puts a lot of information right in front of you, so once you know where to look on the screen getting there is pretty simple. It didn't take long at all to get the console passing audio, and if it

was already patched it shouldn't be much of a stretch for any competent operator to walk up and pull a mix.

Setting up effects sends and returns took a little more effort, but was still achieved relatively quickly. Like many consoles, there is often more than one way to achieve your aims on the Vi1. Patching is nice and simple, and the screen layout for the patching system instantly made sense - this is not always the case on some units.

Continued Page 51 ----->

There's a quiet elegance in the simplicity of it all. You can setup user layers which can combine channels, VCAs, and such forth - this process again was pretty self explanatory. Really the only difficulty I had was understanding the snapshot recall operation. Given that no other process on the console is overly complicated I think reading the manual would clear this up relatively quickly too.

Mute and VCA group assignments is simple, and the large mute buttons are really nice. Big buttons which light up are a good thing - they reduce the margin for error and make it instantly clear what's muted and what's not. Fader glow is a feature designed to differentiate the function of each fader - channel / VCA / subgroup etc. The track in which each fader sits lights up in a different colour depending on its function. It's a nice idea, though unlikely to be effective in an outdoor setting - it seems a bit gimmicky. The on-screen buss metering is small but effective enough. The LED VU meters for main and solo busses are bright and nicely responsive.

The sleek and uncluttered appearance of the Vi1 conceals what



Vistonics Touch Screen

is, below the surface, a powerful and very capable console. It operates well and it sounds good. Everything you need to get to can be gotten to quickly once you know where to look - the console is clearly designed with live users in mind. I'd like a little more time to get used to it, but given this luxury I'd happily take it to my gig any day of the week. I might even request it!

What and Where

Brand: Soundcraft

Model: Vi1

RRP: \$45,445 00 inc GST

Product info:

<http://soundcraft.com>

Distributor:

<http://www.jands.com.au>

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SOUNDCRAFT'S DIGITAL LIVE FAMILY OF SYSTEMS

Soundcraft Si Compact 16, 24 and 32.

These entry level consoles come with 14 aux sends and LCR outputs, plus 4 matrix busses. 4 Lexicon effects and small footprint make these viable for church, smaller venues and corporate shows. Compact has one fader for every input.

Soundcraft Si1, Si2, Si3.

We reviewed the Si2 on video and had thousands of hits. This family sits in the space between the Compact and the Vi range - with Si

Compact and the Si both using the same derivative operating system. All Si have connectors on the back without external racks. These boast 24 auxiliary busses, 8 matrix groups and have two pages of channels. The Si3 with 64 inputs, for example, has 32 input faders on the console.

Soundcraft Vi1

This new console sits alone in the Vi range with connectors (in and out) on the back of the console. See this review!

Soundcraft Vi2, Vi4 and Vi6. This is the top end system offering, with

remote racks. Up to 92 inputs with 32 groups and sends - these are cousins to Studer's Vista series of consoles, using a derivation of the Vistonics user interface. They have the same type of touch-screen colour TFT monitor with integral rotary controls and switches mounted on the glass to provide a 'where you look is where you control' user interface.

α

Photo Above: SC family Si Compact 32

Photo Below: SC family Soundcraft Vi6



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BLACKMAGIC DESIGN BROADCAST CONVERTER

With digital video becoming more readily available, integration with existing analogue systems becomes more important. Here's one way to do it.



Let's say you've got an analogue tape machine - Betacam SP, VHS, whatever. You need to connect it into your digital video mixer. Or you might have a digital video source such as a camera which needs to be integrated into a component video switcher. Or you want to display an HD-SDI signal on a video monitor which only has an HDMI input. There are plenty of devices on the market which will perform one of these functions, but typically buying dedicated single purpose devices may not be cost effective for hire companies. Bring on the Broadcast Converter from Blackmagic Design. It does it all.

The Broadcast Converter is a small and unassuming device at just 1RU high, it can be front or back rack mounted using the included ears. It has comprehensive analogue inputs and outputs - composite, s-video and component (all on BNC connectors), as well as stereo balanced audio

input and output on XLRs. It has HDMI input and output ports, as well as SDI input and twin SDI outputs. The Broadcast Converter works as a transcoder, which means two simultaneous conversions are possible - it can convert SDI to analog or HDMI while at the same time converting analog to HDMI to SDI. The SDI input is switchable between SD, HD, and 3G signals, and the SDI output will match the input format.

All under control

The device also features a USB port to allow connection to a Mac or PC computer - this is how the device is configured. A piece of software called the Multibridge utility allows you to control the conversion mode of the converter, as well as make adjustments to video levels and such. The software is really intuitive and basically shows you a block diagram for the device, with drop-down

menus for each input and output stage. Firmware updates are also done via the same utility - I had to update the unit I tested prior to the Multibridge utility allowing control over it. The update happened quickly and flawlessly - this not always the case with some devices, so it was nice to see the process worked reliably.

I spoke with some broadcast industry folk, and it seems the quality of the conversion is quite highly regarded. It certainly does what it says on the box, and does it easily and well. But the real breakthrough is the price - time was when you could expect to pay more for a single purpose converter than the whole Broadcast Converter (which does way more) costs. That's pretty cool, but when you add in the fact it can embed and de-embed audio to and from an SDI signal it suddenly gets even cooler. It does a lot for the money, and is likely to be of great interest to production companies who want versatility and value from their equipment.



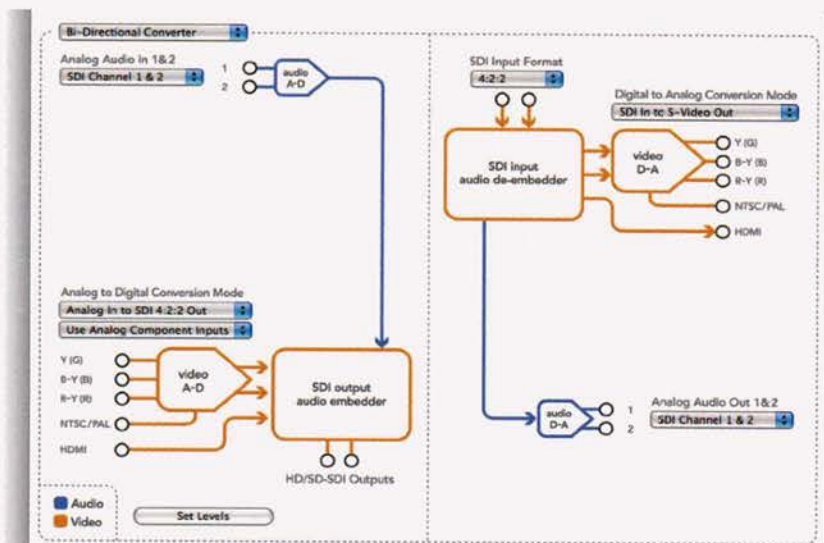
By Jimmy Den-Ouden

What and Where

Brand: Blackmagic Design
Model: Broadcast Converter
RRP: \$1375 inc GST

Product Info:
<http://blackmagic-design.com>

Distributor:
<http://blackmagic-design.com>



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ProCo are based in Michigan and produce a variety of audio interconnect products. Among their range of "Trade Tools" is the ITX in-line isolation transformer range.

Designed to isolate line level audio signals between devices which may be earthed via different paths, the ITX in-line transformer is a handy way to solve hum problems quickly and effectively.

The product is available in 3 variants - ITX has XLR input and output, the

ITX-Q has an unbalanced jack on one end and male XLR on the other. ITX-QB is balanced jack to male XLR variation.

Applications where the ITX transformer may be useful are connecting a console matrix output to a video record, solving hum problems in a PA system, or indeed any other application where a 600 ohm 1:1 line level isolation transformer is required.

The ITX retails around the \$132 mark, and is distributed by Madison Technologies in Australia. See www.procosound.com for product info.

DPA Microphone University

Ever wanted to learn more about mic technique, acoustics, polar patterns, or stereo techniques? If so, you should check out the DPA Microphone University website. It's loaded with useful technical information and techniques, written in easy to read language which makes sense.

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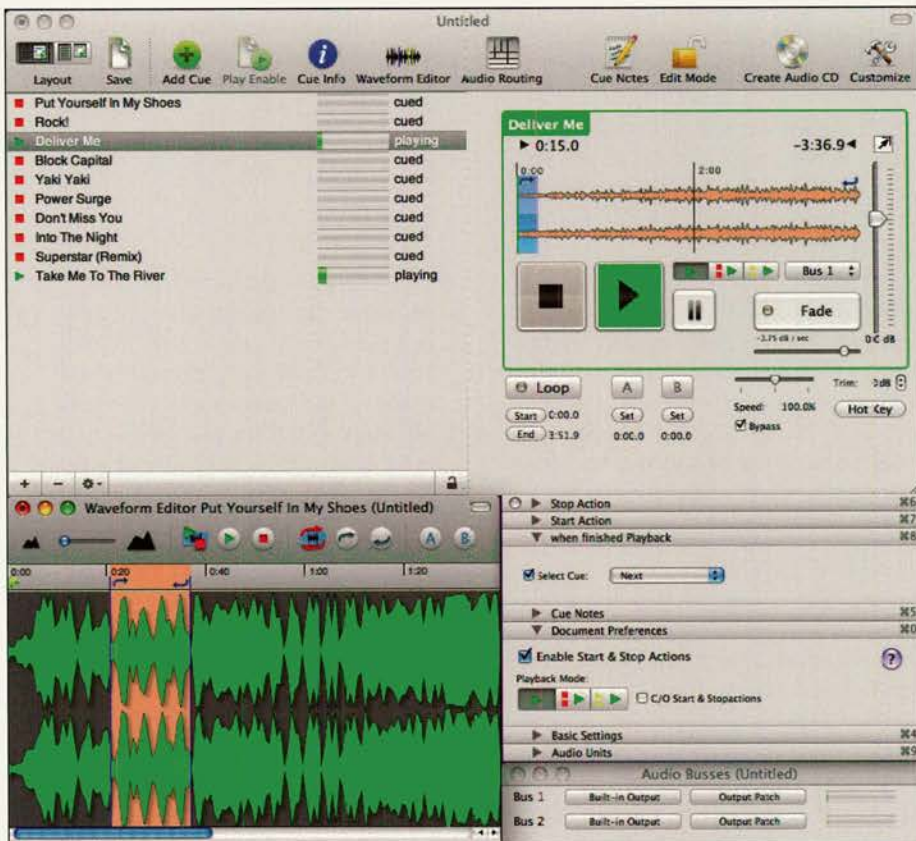
Red Curtain Theatre Playback System

With compact disc becoming a rarity in live production (and tape virtually extinct!), it makes sense to turn to a computer based replay system. Red Curtain software for Mac is designed to serve this need, and has been designed to work in conjunction with Frontier Design's Alphatrack USB DAW controller.

Red Curtain allows you to load in a bunch of audio files to a playlist, set in and out points for each file, along with customizable "start", "stop" and "finished playing" actions. There are large on-screen keys for play and stop, and there's even a fade-out function with variable fade time. Files can be looped and played while other files in the playlist are started and stopped independently. If you have multiple audio outputs you can even route different tracks out of different audio outputs - so for instance an ambient crowd track could be looped and run continuously out one output, while play-on or play-off tracks run separately through another. Different playback levels and speeds can be set for each track.

Red Curtain is compatible with a variety of MIDI controllers, but the best functionality is yielded when using the Alphatrack controller - this allows you to select tracks using a rotary encoder, start and stop using physical transport keys as well as trigger fade-outs from a key and see the fader move down in real time.

Check out the free trial version at <http://nobusiness-soft.com/redcurtain>



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EPSON EB-1775W PROJECTOR

The featherweight in the blue corner that punches well above its class.



By Jimmy Den-Ouden

The EB-1775W turned up in the review bunker cunningly disguised as a much bigger projector. When I eventually got around to opening the cardboard box, I was greeted with layer upon layer of bubble wrap. Somewhere buried beneath it all was a tiny little bag, and within that a tiny little projector. I took the projector in to Steve's office and demanded to know if this was some kind of joke.

Apparently it's not a joke - it's just really tiny. The EB-1775W is a 3000 ANSI Lumen projector which is 45mm thick and weighs 1.7kg. If you were to remove the 4 warning labels on top and change the logo you could probably tout it as "my first projector". The native resolution is 1289x800 (WXGA), a widescreen aspect designed to match up with modern laptops. The spec quotes the projection system as "RGB Liquid Crystal Shutter Projection System", which apparently is engineer speak for "LCD". The 1-1.2 zoom ratio

means you can project a 60' image from 1.35-1.62m away, and further out a 300" image can be achieved from 6.81-8.18m.

The 1W in-built speaker is hardly likely to blow your mind with its audio reproduction quality (I think my laptop sounds better), but the 2000:1 contrast ratio on the other hand is very respectable. The unit supports composite, s-video, component, as well as analogue RGB and HDMI. How it supports S-video is unclear - I am yet to find the alleged mini DIN connector as listed in the spec. Not that it really matters - most folks will likely use composite or component for analogue video anyway. There are also 2 kinds of USB ports and a power connector, which just barely fits into the back panel. Seriously, it is that small.

The EB-1775W doesn't just work with cables - there's a whole bunch of other ways you can display content on it. Included is a wireless connection system that allows you to send computer video to the projector, as well as the capability to playback images off USB media (flash drive etc). These features will

be of interest to those in corporate environments - the USB playback would be an easy way to show slideshows at tradeshow booths and product launches without the need for a laptop. It's certainly bright enough to have an impact even in a tradeshow situation, and plus you have no need to worry about some passer-by taxing your laptop.

Warning!

I counted 5 warning stickers on the casing including my favourite "There is a possibility that the lamp may be cracked. Be very careful when opening the lamp cover". It seems a bit scary and a bit like OH&S gone mad, but then again there is a really bright lamp inside a tiny case - of course it's going to get hot and be fragile.

The projector will operate in desk or ceiling mount orientation and is capable of front and rear projection. For mobile users setup is a doddle - turn the unit on then point it at the projection surface. The EB-1775W will correctly horizontally keystone the image to the wall if necessary,



Photo Left: Back panel connectors



Photo Right: Lamp module

and focus it. If the projected image doesn't fit on the screen, press the "screen fit" button and the image will be shrunk to fit the available space and re-focused. It takes about 4 seconds. Magic? Not quite; there's a tiny little camera in the front of the projector which works in conjunction with its very smart brain to figure this stuff out. You can manually override keystone and focus too. If you shift the projector about it will detect this movement, and once still it will auto calibrate again.

Bright ideas

A 2 year warranty (excluding lamp) is a bright idea, so EPSON include it. A really cheap lamp is another bright idea - the replacement unit for this projector retails at \$119. Any more

light related puns would simply be dull, so we'll leave it there. The front angle adjust system is simple and has a good degree of fine adjustment. There's an integral lens cover which is actuated by a slider on top of the unit. The in-built help function gives context sensitive help - ie: if RGB input is selected it will tell you how to activate the external display function on several common laptops.

There's a lot to like about this projector, not the least of which being you can hand it to a novice operator and the EB-1775W will do most of the thinking for them. It's yet another example of how great technology is becoming more affordable.



What and Where

Brand: EPSON

Model: EB-1775W

RRP: \$1,999.00 inc GST

Product Info:

<http://epson.com.au>

Distributor:

<http://epson.com.au>



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The Jands JLX-PRO is designed to comply with the electrical safety requirements of AS3100:2002 and is designed for use as a lifting beam to AS4991:2004, Classification C2.

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By Jimmy Den-Ouden

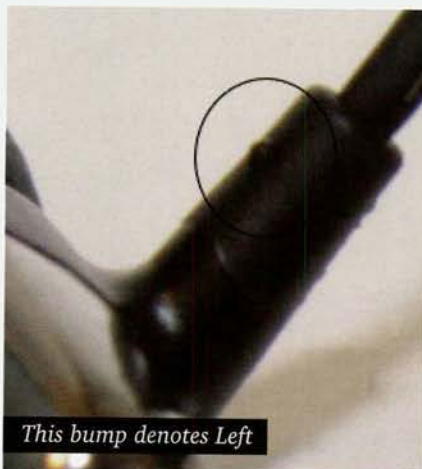
Audio Technica's ATH-CK100 are made of titanium, weigh in at 4 grams, and hit the market as the world's smallest triple armature driver earphones. Visually, most earphones do one of two things: try to blend in, or try to stand out. The CK100s sit in the latter category - the titanium housings will surely please those who like all things shiny. It might not be everyone's style, but I reckon they look pretty cool.

What makes for a good IEM?

To my mind, it's one which will form a decent seal with your ear canal and thus provide some attenuation of external noise (such as guitar rigs on stage). It shouldn't fall out too easily - generally the performers who rely most on IEM technology tend to be the more animated variety. It's difficult to sing and dance on stage if your ears keep falling out. Plus it has to sound right - a big scoopy EQ with

chunks of mid-range absent might be real nice for background music, but would make for a near useless IEM.

The CK100s fit the bill on all the above counts. They sat snugly in my ears and formed a good seal, and firmly refused to fall out no matter how much I shook my head around. A really solid tug on the cable would probably dislodge them, but you face similar problems with just about any earphone. I'm not 100% certain that the cables are supposed to loop over your ears, but I used them like this and it worked well.



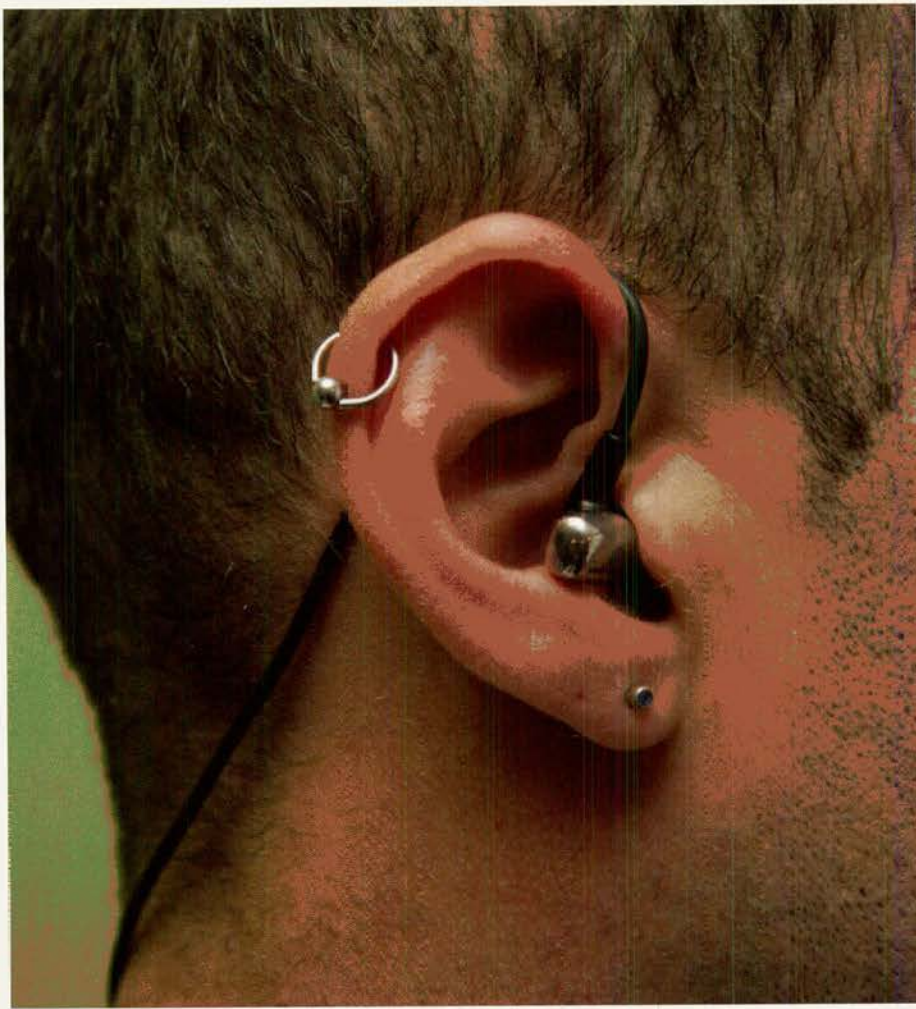
This bump denotes Left

The other left!

You know how left and right are important to get the right way around? If you're running mono ears then this may not apply, but for the most part people will know and care about the difference. The CK100s don't make it real easy to figure out which one to stick in which ear - it turns out there's a little tiny extruded dot on the left earphone. Once you know this it doesn't matter but I had to read the manual to make this discovery, which is a bit of a problem. The upside to this is that if you happen to be in the dark, a written label is far less useful than a tactile indicator dot.

Presentation is nice - the units are delivered in a nice little kit including 3 sets of different sized silicone earpieces to suit different ears, as well as a cleaning cloth and carry pouch. The standard earpieces fit my ears well so I didn't try changing them, but it doesn't appear to be very difficult.

Since it matters, let's talk about how they sound. They sound right. The whole usefully audible frequency



spectrum is well represented, with a slight accentuation in the mid-high range. There's enough drive capacity in the tiny casings to produce clean sound well beyond the capability of your ears to tolerate it. They sound right for use as IEMs. They don't sound quite right for use with an iPod or other music player - they are intended for a different purpose and this is evident in their tonality characteristics. Interestingly enough when using them on a music player they do bring out stuff in recordings you may not have previously heard (as well as the noisefloor in the player itself). Ultimately the ATH-CK100s are good, and if you can stomach the price they're likely to serve you well.



What and Where

Brand: Audio Technica

Model: ATH-CK100

RRP: \$699 inc GST

Product Info:

<http://audio-technica.com>

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THE PERILS OF PINSPOTS

"I want to put a ding in the universe."
Steve Jobs

By Richard Cadena

At the beginning of the year, Stacy Johnson wrote a piece for MoneyTalksNews entitled "Things Babies Born in 2011 Will Never Know." Among the items he listed on the endangered list were video tape, travel agents, books, magazines, newspapers, movie rental stores, watches, paper maps, wired phones, long distance, newspaper classifieds (my 14-year-old daughter read this and asked me what one was), dial-up internet, encyclopedias, CDs, film camera, catalogs, fax machines, and wires.

Should theatrical dimmers be on that list?

As quickly as LEDs have advanced in the last few years, it's not out of the realm of possibility that incandescent lamps and conventional dimmers could be overtaken by LEDs and pulse-width modulated dimming. But until that happens, there is more to know about dimmers and how to use them.

Although we've been using dimmers for years, I still get questions about whether or not it's okay to put a pinspot on a dimmer. Some people say it's not a good idea and others say they've been doing it for years and they're not going to stop doing it. What's the truth about dimming pinspots?

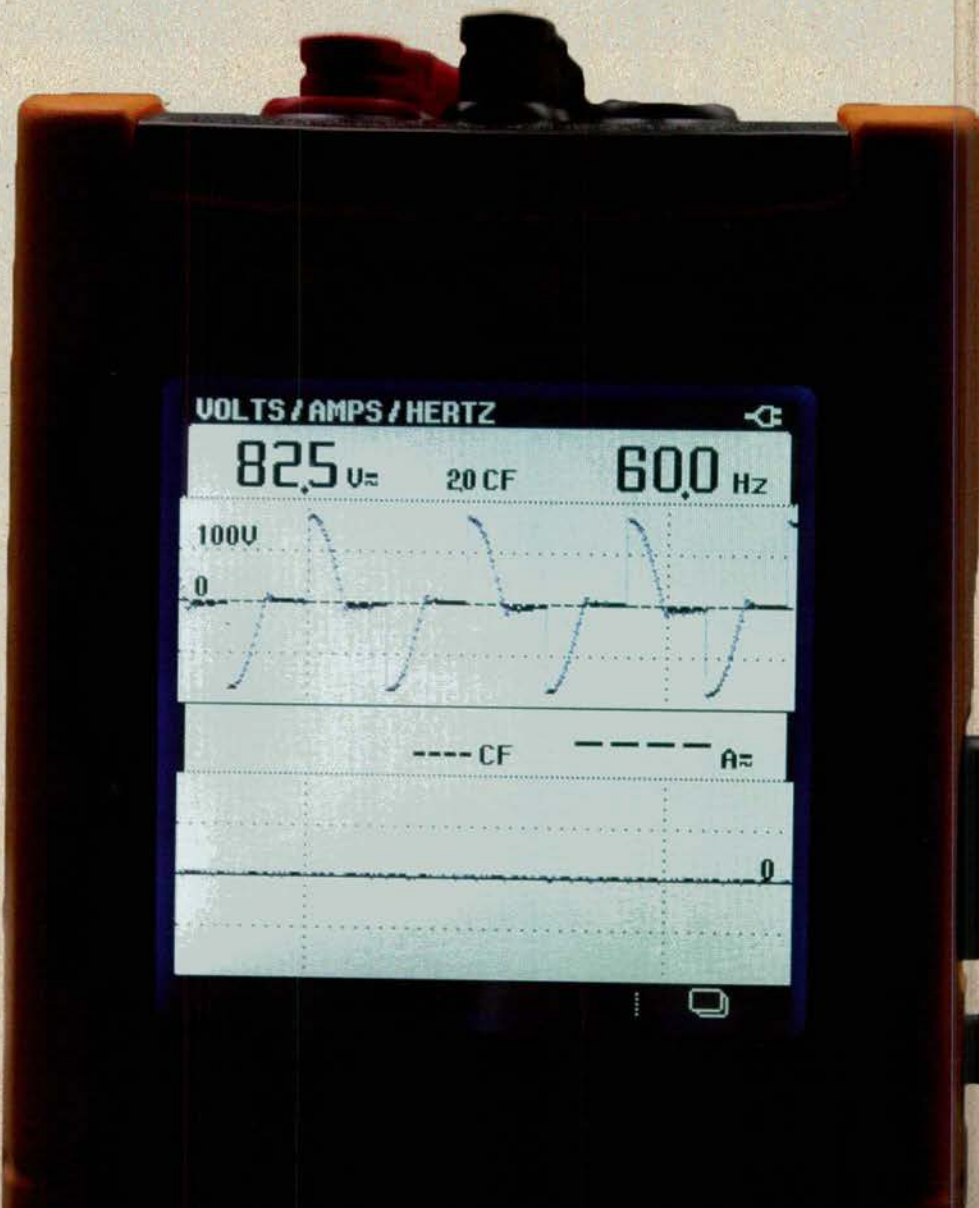
A pinspot is a small PAR can with a low-voltage, low wattage lamp. They have a very narrow beam that produces a pencil-thin shaft of light, or a pin beam - thus the name. They typically draw their power from the mains supply, so in order to change the voltage to the rated voltage of the lamp requires a transformer. If you were to open a pinspot by taking off the yoke and removing the front bezel and the lamp, you would find a small low-voltage transformer in it. This is the source of confusion about the nature of dimming a pinspot.

A conventional forward phase-control dimmer switches the input voltage from OFF to ON at very precise times. It happens once during the positive half cycle of the sine wave and once during the negative half cycle. By varying the firing angle of the switch, the dimming level can be set using a low-voltage control signal like DMX.

But when the voltage is switched on, it changes very rapidly from 0V to some positive or negative voltage

level, depending on the firing angle. This very quick change in the voltage causes a sharp spike in the waveform and it can wreak havoc on the system with certain types of loads, including those with a transformer.

A transformer is an inductive load, and as such, it resists rapid changes in the current flowing through it. Think of it as a paddlewheel in a hydro system. Once a paddlewheel is set in motion by the flow of water (of in this case, electricity), then if the water suddenly changes directions



(as does alternating current or AC), then the paddlewheel has to first slow down before it can change directions. It can't instantaneously change directions without violating the laws of physics. The same is true of an electrical system. Once current is flowing through an inductor, the magnetic field that builds up around it resists a sudden change in direction or magnitude of the current.

In an electrical circuit, if the current through an inductor or transformer reverses direction or rises suddenly, then the magnetic field causes voltage to be fed back to the source. This is called "back EMF" or back electromagnetic force. (EMF is the same as voltage.) The back EMF can destroy circuit components like triacs and SCRs, which are the switches in forward phase-control dimmers.

The transformer can also be damaged by a dimming circuit if the waveform resulting from the switching is not exactly symmetrical with respect to zero volts. In other words, if the positive half is not the exact mirror image of the negative half, then it produces a DC "offset" current that flows through the transformer. A transformer is simply two back-to-back inductors or coils of wire, and a coil of wire presents virtually no resistance to DC. The only resistance it offers to DC is the resistance of the copper wire, which is tiny. Ohm's law ($I = V / R$) says that for a certain amount of voltage, if the resistance is really, really small, then a huge amount of current will flow in the circuit. And that's what can happen with a dimmer controlling a transformer - a huge amount of current flows and it burns up the transformer and/or the dimmer.

I did some tests with a pinspot on a Lex Slimmer Dimmer and in the process I found an interesting phenomenon. When the dimming level dropped to around 10%, the voltage waveform went completely haywire and the transformer in the pinspot started buzzing loudly. Whatever the cause of the malfunction, the DC current in the circuit shot up and if I had let it continue it would have burned up the transformer. I suspect that's why dimmers designed for fluorescent lamps can only dim to 10% or in some cases, 1%. They are probably built to avoid this from happening and damaging the circuit. The magnetic ballast in a fluorescent lamp is an inductor just like the primary side of a transformer and they are susceptible to the same dimming pitfalls as a pinspot.

Pinspots are great lighting tools. I love their pin-sized beams and if you throw in on a mirrorball it can look really elegant in the right environment. If you have an array of pinspots you can create some fabulous chases and effects. The icing on the cake is that pinspots are really inexpensive these days. I recently bought some for U\$10 apiece, and that was the retail price. If you're trying to design a lighting system on a budget, pinspots can really help you stretch the budget and fill out your design.

Don't let a \$10 pinspot throw a spanner in the works and ruin a \$200 dimmer module. You can use a dry contact closure to turn pinspots on and off and if you must dim them, do it at your own peril because it can cause damage to your equipment.

α

Resistance is futile

Email the author now at:
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ummmm...

-----> Continued from Page 8

twig in a drought.

"You stupid asshole," I yelled, and lunged at him.

I picked him up by the throat and slammed him against the PA stacks so hard his eyes rolled around like the wheels on a poker machine.

He sat on the floor, a bit dazed, while I gave him the complete contents of my mental shit file. The rest of the band hovered nervously around the edge of the stage, waiting to see what would happen.

Finally, I pulled out my ace.

"And if I don't get all the money right now, I'm going to leave your stage gear out on the street here, and you'll have to send it back home on a semi-trailer!"

This was no idle threat, as their equipment had no roadcases. The keyboard player had two brand new synthesizers, and I'm sure he had visions of them arriving back home in a rather condensed form. He saw what was going on and dashed across the stage.

"For God's sake, give him the money," he yelled, dragging the wallet out of the drummer's hands, and counting out \$100 bills into my hands as fast as he could. Ah, that threat works every time, especially if they're far from home (Canberra in this case) and you have the only viable form of transport!

I had forgotten all of this forgetting

(cue Elvis singing -"I forgot to remember to forget") until I mixed a night of new music by three independent bands last week at a small club in the city. I had a house system, with 10 mics and leads and stands, a 'W' bin standing on its end with a 15" and horn box on top each side, plus a couple of wedges. And that was about all that there was room for on the stage. Not a perfect system but one that worked, and would stand up to the nightly hammering a house system might expect to get every night.

Arriving there for the soundcheck, one of the bar staff gave me a box of mics and leads, which I counted out and signed for, since the worksheet said that no-one would be paid until all mics and leads had been returned.

The bands started to roll in, and they

"All set?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, "I just need my cymbals."

"Oh, are they in the van?" she replied, "I'll go and grab them for you."

"No," he said, sheepishly, "They're at home!"

"At home? Shit that's miles away! Can you play without them?"

"No, I'll really need them."

had all decide to do a certain amount of backline sharing, given the limited space. The second band's drummer brought the kit, and started to set up. After about 15 minutes he was finished. The singer went over to him.

It transpired that home was halfway to Phillip Island, so that would be a round trip of about 140K on a good day with the wind in the right direction.

So they both started a ring-around of rehearsal studios, friends, and eventually sourced some from another drummer who lived a fair way out of town. He said he could meet them in the car park of a 7 Eleven on Dandenong Road, still not that close to the city but do-able. So off they all went.

In the end it all worked out, and the whole night went well. The desk was an Allen and Heath 16:2 MixWiz, compact and covered in the grunge that any horizontal surface attracts in these venues. But it worked fine, with good EQ, and I had no problems at all. It's strange mixing at a gig and not knowing any of the songs, as all the bands played original material. Luckily they had all brought their friends and fans along, who whooped and applauded after every song.

I'm continually amazed at the quality of new bands and their songs. It's a tough business - I hope some of them make it.

And hey, we all forget stuff. Even me!

α



uncan Fry

OOPS I FORGOT IT

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Have you ever had that sinking feeling when getting to the gig, setting everything up, going to put the final connections together, and then realising that a vital part of the system is missing? And then the end of the previous gig floats into your memory and, as if by magic, you can hear yourself saying 'Mustn't forget to put that in the truck!'

Well, I'm sorry to disillusion everyone who thinks I only write about other people's stuff-ups, but I've done more than my fair share of them myself!

For example, I've got to the gig and discovered that I've left the external power supply for the mixing desk back at the factory. Not too much of a problem you might think - just call the guys to put it in a taxi and send it over to me? Good idea, but I was in Mt Gambier at the time, over 300k away! Luckily Dale Cleves' Music Centre came to my rescue with a loaner desk (with power supply!), so we got through the night and still managed to get paid.

Another time, another mixer - this time I left its power cable behind at the previous night's gig. Nothing major, just a regular IEC connector - a 'jug plug' as they are commonly known. Very common these days as every piece of equipment has a

removable power lead. In the dim dark past, however, it wasn't so, and throughout the whole system there were only two others. One was on the guitarist's Marshall, and one was on my digital effects unit.

Hmm, decisions, decisions. Which one to cannibalise? In the end it was a fairly simple choice; without an amp for the guitarist the band couldn't play, but I could live without an effects unit and still do the gig reasonably well. And get paid, too, because most likely the band would never know which they didn't!

Then there were the two boxes of ring tweeters left neatly stacked in the car park of Ritchie's Night Spot as I drove home one night. After being asleep for only an hour I woke up in a cold sweat with a vision of them in my head. Driving all the way back there, I found them still sitting there, twinkling in the beams of my headlights, just waiting for me.

On a mini tour around the back of NSW, the drummer in the band

complained that we'd left his drum stool behind in Griffith, the first gig of the tour. It was an ordinary bar stool he'd knocked off from some hotel, and at the end of the night he'd taken it off stage and sat at the bar on it, talking to some girls. Of course, he left it there at the bar, nestling amongst all the other bar stools, and so did we.

When we realised what had happened we were already at the next gig, and there was no way we were going back to get the stool since it was a round trip of about 500k. He bitched incessantly that 'we'd' lost it and technically we had, but I told him it was his fault and he'd just have to wear it or knock off another one. The rest of the band agreed.

The drummer was also the keeper of the finances, so at the last gig I went to see him to get the money and petrol expenses before loading out.

Not a good move on his part, considering my general state of tiredness. My temper snapped like a

“Oh no,” he whinged, “I'm not giving you any money until you go back and get my drum stool!”

Continued Page 65 ----->

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